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The Secret Gardeners: An Ethnography of
Improvised Music in Berlin (2012-13)

Tom Arthurs

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Abstract

This thesis addresses the aesthetics, ideologies and practicalities of contemporary European Improvised Music-making - this term referring to the tradition that emerged from 1960s American jazz and free jazz, and that remains, arguably, one of today's most misunderstood and under-represented musical genres.

Using a multidisciplinary approach drawing on Grounded Theory, Ethnography and Social Network Analysis, and bounded by Berlin's cosmopolitan local scene of 2012-13, I define Improvised Music as a field of differing-yet-interconnected practices, and show how musicians and listeners conceived of and differentiated between these sub-styles, as well as how they discovered and learned to appreciate such a hidden, 'difficult' and idiosyncratic artform.

Whilst on the surface Improvised Music might appear chaotic and beyond analysis in conventional terms, I show that, just like any other music, Improvised Music has its own genre-specific conventions, structures and expectations, and this research investigates its specific modes of performance, listening and appreciation - including the need to distinguish between 'musical' and 'processual' improvisatory outcomes, to differentiate between different 'levels' of improvising, and to separate the group and personal levels of the improvisatory process. I define improvised practices within this field as variable combinations of 'composed' (pre-planned) and 'improvised' (real-time) elements, and examine the specific definitions of 'risk', 'honesty', 'trust', and 'good' and 'bad' music-making which mediate these choices - these distinctions and evaluatory frameworks leading to a set of proposed conventions and distinctions for Improvised Music listening and production.

This study looks at the representation of identity by improvising musicians, the use of social and political models as analogies for the improvisatory process (including the interplay between personal freedom of expression and the construction of coherent collective outcomes), and also examines the multiple functions of recording, in a music that was ostensibly only meant for the moment of its creation.

All of this serves to address several popular misconceptions concerning Improvised Music, and does so directly from the point of view of a large sample of its most important practitioners and connoisseurs.

Such findings provide key insights into the appreciation and understanding of Improvised Music itself (both for newcomers and those already adept in its ways), and this thesis offers important suggestions for scholars of Musicology, Ethnomusicology, Sociology of Music, Improvisation Studies, Performance Studies and Music/Cognitive Psychology, as well as for those concerned with improvisation and creativity in more general, non-musical, terms.

Declaration

I hereby declare:

- a. I have composed this thesis.
- b. The work is my own.
- c. The work has not been submitted for any other degree or professional qualification except as specified.

Signed

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A Note on Terminology and Translation

I use several problematic and contested terms throughout this study to refer to classical music, Neue Musik, rock, pop, experimental electronic music and so on. These terms are used in an unapologetically loose sense (and in the sense that they were used in interviews and in the existing literature), however, in the case of terms relating directly to Improvised Music (and especially those defined during the course of this study), I have deliberately used capital letters and have endeavoured to clarify each term as I proceed.

The term Neue Musik (used by most practitioners here, also often when speaking English) is used to reference what might otherwise be referred to as 20th-21st Century classical music or contemporary/avant-garde classical music (distinguishing it from ‘classical’ music, which refers to Romantic and pre-Romantic classical music). I avoid the term ‘experimental music’ as far as possible, acknowledging its vagueness as covering everything from classical music (Nyman’s usage, for example) to abstract electronic music (originating in the dance music world).

All translations from German are my own, except where otherwise stated.

Part I

Chapter 1

Introduction

A small man in a red suit, seated in a former butchers' shop, blowing multicoloured air sounds into a slide trumpet, sink plunger held aloft, the sound of traffic punctuating his silences.

A neatly-dressed woman in her early 40s, placing small objects on the frame of a piano, feeding it into a mixing desk, making microscopically precise adjustments, accompanied by an animated Italian man operating a reel-to-reel tape recorder - pulling the tape and deftly flicking switches.

The most complex, winding-yet-joyful, chromatic saxophone virtuosity accompanied by hyper-conversational bass and drums, deep in the cellar of a tourist bar in Berlin Mitte.

Although these observations were recorded during my fieldwork in 2013, these were very much the kind of experiences that helped to cement my fascination with Berlin's Improvised Music scene some ten years earlier, and though I didn't move to the city until 2008 (motivated by the vibrant cultural scene, a cast of strong and dedicated musicians and cheap living), many such performances and recordings have come to have a profound and lasting effect on my musical practice, as well as my general listening and life beyond.

Admittedly, Improvised Music might not be a term with any particular meaning for readers who haven't already stumbled upon the field - no, it's not jazz; no, it's not just 'making it up as you go along'; and nor is it a saxophone solo on a Gloria Estefan record, an Indian raga or a harpsichordist's figured bass (although, at the same time, it is variously connected to all of these things). However, for a small international community of musicians and connoisseurs, and for the purposes of this study, the term¹ has come to represent a specific range of specialist musical practices and a social milieu

¹Along with the similarly contested designations 'Free Improvisation', 'Open Improvisation', 'Free Improvised Music' and 'Non-Idiomatic Improvisation' [Bailey, 1993, 83].

that exists almost entirely outside of the mainstream music industry, remains almost entirely hidden from view, and where, as this thesis will show, its roots in 1960s jazz and Free Jazz have evolved into a rich and varied field with its own diversity of conventions, philosophies and ideologies.

Growing up in Corby, a Northamptonshire (ex-)steel town of 50,000 people (and pre-dominantly populated by displaced Glaswegians), my first contact to this world came, age 15, with hearing Evan Parker's solo saxophone introduction to 'Sea Lady' on Kenny Wheeler's ECM release *Music for Large and Small Ensembles*.² Shortly after, I chanced on one of Parkers' trio recordings (with Barry Guy and Paul Lytton) at the house of a fellow trumpet student (whose father had seemingly bought it by mistake) and, even though this music was far beyond my understanding (just as the Miles Davis second quintet had been shortly before), a certain fascination had already begun.

While living in London, and despite being probably better known as a jazz musician, Improvised Music was always there for me, and these experiences included an almost-silent VHF concert in the record shop Sound 323 (that I remember to this day),³ Evan Parker's monthly slot at the Vortex⁴ and almost-weekly visits to the legendary underground improv/performance/anything-goes club The Klinker (which was on the same Hackney street where I lived).

Following a handful of trips to the continent in my mid-20s, however, I was immediately impressed by Berlin, where several Improvised Music concerts appeared to be happening every night, and where a small-but-attentive audience regularly congregated in a range of intimate 'DIY' venues, the likes of which I hadn't known in London or elsewhere.⁵ After a performance at Jazzfest Berlin in 2007, and in a moment of particular freedom in my personal life, my decision was made, and two months later I moved to the border of Prenzlauer Berg, Wedding and Pankow, beginning a new life in Germany's still-blossoming capital.

Within the first weeks, a benefit concert for the *Konfrontationen* festival⁶ in the Festsaal Kreuzberg provided a fitting introduction to many of the musicians interviewed here, as well as to a wide range of approaches to Improvised Music (Clayton Thomas, Andrea

²The connection to Wheeler came through the county's youth big band, at a time where I was fortunate to have received private classical trumpet lessons, and was growing up in a household where my mother, as a local schoolteacher, played piano and clarinet. In addition to my classical education, my jazz education had begun a few years earlier through a fortunate convergence of tap dancing classes, BBC Radio (Jazz Record Requests, which I somewhat obsessively recorded onto cassette each week before selecting my highlights), and the enthusiasms of my school physics teacher (Mahavishnu Orchestra), and a schoolfriend's father (Count Basie, Oscar Peterson).

³VHF was the trio of Simon Vincent, Graham Halliwell, Simon H. Fell, associated with London's New Silence movement, and who contributed the first recording to the label Erstwhile (later home to many of Berlin's Reductionist improvisers). The concert was around the year 2000.

⁴A friend regularly described this experience as like having to the opportunity to see John Coltrane in his time.

⁵This was pre-Café Oto, one of London's most important venues for Improvised Music, which opened in 2008.

⁶*Konfrontationen* is an important Improvised Music festival in Nickelsdorff, Austria.

Neumann, Tobias Delius, Axel Dörner and Steve Heather were all included), and I spent the first six months of my stay out almost every evening, investigating the local scene and delighting in both its scope and its intricacies.

What was happening in Berlin has remained a source of inspiration ever since, however, despite my own enthusiasm and love for Improvised Music, I have always been aware of the other side of the coin, and the popular dismissal of Improvised Music as chaos, noise (in the worst sense of the word), a music that ‘anyone’ could do, or, at best, a genre where the rules of play were so different to any other field of music-making that it might not be clear to the listener that there were any structures, conventions, thought or preparation underlying its creation at all.

To give a typical example, in 2011, the cellist Roland Gräter appeared on the German TV show *Das Supertalent* and played an improvised piece,⁷ with host Dieter Bohlan forewarning the audience that “Usually that ends in cacophony”, and advising them that:

When four people are playing and nobody knows what the others are playing, and that you’re not playing the same thing, then the probability it doesn’t fit together is relatively great.

Following the short performance (quickly terminated by the judges, and edited to include only laughter and looks of horror from the audience)⁸ judge Sylvie van der Vaart exclaimed, “Sorry I buzzed so early, but I didn’t want to get a headache!”, and her colleague Motsi Mabuse continued:

What you did wasn’t fair! You tricked us! You asked us to open our ears, and then you violated them!

Further examples abound - a non-musician friend of mine referring to one concert as “fart noises”, my family referring to this area of my output as “elephants and raspberries”, and a friend of one performer describing her listening experience as like “having her guts ripped out”.

On a very basic level then, it was this disconnect between my intensely meaningful experiences as a performer and listener, and such popular notions of Improvised Music that provided the initial motivation for this thesis, and the quest to show that, just like any other artform (whether English folk music, Renaissance painting or beat poetry), that there are comprehensible structures, rules, agreements and conventions underlying even the ‘free-est’ and most ‘difficult’ of artforms. This interest was compounded by a gap between existing theory and practice felt by several musician colleagues, and a

⁷Gräter is not from Berlin, however he has played with many important improvisers from the international scene. *Das Supertalent* is the German franchise of ‘Britain’s Got Talent’ or ‘America’s Got Talent’, and Bohlen is something of a German Simon Cowell figure. See [Gräter, 2011].

⁸Memories of John Cage’s appearance on the 1960s TV show *I’ve Got a Secret* spring to mind [Cage, 1960].

literature that often spoke of Improvised Music as if it were one unified musical form or social group.

I wondered exactly what it was that musicians were doing when they were improvising, what decisions they were making in the moment and in advance, and was curious to see whether it would be possible to draw any meaningful conclusions from a study of a music scene that (at least superficially) encompassed such diversity and individuality, as well as investigating whether these musicians' own descriptions of their activities could be aligned with existing theories of improvisation and Improvised Music.

This, then, is what I set out to do in this thesis: to work towards establishing the underlying conventions of Improvised Music-making, to discover some of the motivations and intentions behind it, and to provide a key (akin to the texts accompanying great visual artworks in galleries) that might provide access for the new listener, as well as providing alternative perspectives for those already adept in its ways.

In terms of structure, Chapters 2 and 3 provide an introduction to many of these matters from a historical and theoretical viewpoint, summarising much of the existing German and English-language literature on Improvised Music-making and improvisation in general.

Chapter 2 investigates key stylistic and ideological developments from the 1960s onwards (examining the evolution of Free Jazz from jazz, Improvised Music from Free Jazz, and the later relationship of Berlin Reductionism to these earlier forms), and examines the key musical/aesthetic and social/political developments that have shaped and defined Improvised Music history.

Chapter 3 turns to the existing theoretical literature on Improvised Music and improvisation (in more general terms), and establishes commonly accepted frameworks that have been used to evaluate and differentiate Improvised Music practices to date. This examines the merits of approaches from social science, performativity, cognitive psychology and musicology, and in doing so, identifies a list of conflicts and queries to be investigated during fieldwork and in the ethnographic part of this thesis.

Chapter 4 outlines the methodological framework used to answer these questions, and the second part of this study sets out to provide these answers in the form of an ethnography, using findings grounded in the field to propose a range of theories and distinctions aimed at aiding a greater understanding of Improvised Music-making and the social space that it inhabits.

Following an empirical portrait of Berlin's 2012-13 Improvised Music scene in Chapter 5 (covering the scene's structure, venues, audiences and economy), Chapter 6 addresses how musicians and listeners distinguished between their various improvised activities in aesthetic terms. This includes a look at how these differing activities co-existed (and took place alongside other, non-improvised, musical and artistic pursuits), and

inspects how musicians constructed musical lives based on their tastes and identities, also showing what these approaches had in common.

Chapter 7 shows how musicians and listeners came to discover such a hidden world of music-making in the first place, looking at the role of formal (institutional) and informal (self-taught) education. And Chapter 8 turns to more practical matters - proposing an Improvised Music-specific definition of the verb 'to improvise', separating the personal and group levels of Improvised Music-making, and examining the individual level of this process. This individual level is explored through descriptions of musician's practise routines and collections of flexible-yet-pre-prepared musical 'materials', and Chapter 9 looks at how these materials are employed in a group context.

This chapter proposes four different 'levels' of improvising (based on different ratios of elements decided in advance and in the moment), and in doing so, calls for the use of two axes of appreciation that distinguish between musical/sounding/aesthetic and processual/interactional levels of music-making. Improvised Music-specific definitions of 'risk', 'the moment', 'honesty', reactive stances, and 'good' and 'bad' music are called into play in mediating the use of compositional elements, rules, concepts, tricks and strategies (all of which will be defined and explored).

Chapter 10 looks at musicians' intentions and listeners' listening experiences (suggesting two equally valid stances, the 'open' and the 'emic'), and goes on to suggest more Improvised Music-specific expectations, strategies and conventions for listening and appreciation, also devoting a section to the three social/political stances adopted by Berlin's contemporary improvisers.

Finally, Chapter 11 looks at the role of recording in a music commonly assumed to exist only for the moment, and the ethnographic part of this thesis concludes with a discussion of the value of live performance in relation to its recorded forms, definitions of three different forms of recorded Improvised Music, and a brief exploration of recording formats, labels, distribution and economies.

While this thesis sets out to cover much ground, I nonetheless acknowledge that this is just a beginning - necessarily there are areas that remain unexplored, important musicians that I wasn't able to interview, and other perspectives (internationally and over time) that remain outside of its scope and possibility. However, I do hope that this study provides an exploration of potential themes for future research, a feasible structure upon which such research might be based, and at the very least, a rich and colourful discussion of the diversity of characters and approaches that constituted Berlin's Improvised Music scene during 2012 and 2013.

Chapter 2

Improvised Music: Musical, Social and Political Backgrounds

This chapter provides a historical context to the ethnographic study that follows - establishing and examining the musical, social and ideological tenets on which today's Improvised Music was built.

While not pretending to be an exhaustive list of recordings, happenings or personalities, the majority of German-language texts cited here were never translated into English, and several volumes, in both languages, remain long out of print. A shortage of German-speaking scholars in British and American Universities (and of German scholars writing in English),¹ means that this material has rarely been collected or compared, and, as I will argue, this range of sources identifies many common misconceptions regarding the origins and nature of Improvised Music.

This chapter, therefore, offers some alternative readings of the history of Improvised Music, and is divided into three sections - firstly, the American beginnings of Free Jazz, secondly, the development of Improvised Music in late 1960s Europe (and Germany), and, thirdly, Improvised Music in Berlin - from the 1990s until the present day.

2.1 Beginnings: America and Free Jazz

Whilst Derek Bailey argues, in his seminal work *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music*, that improvisation has been central to mankind's music-making since its outset [Bailey, 1993, 83], it wasn't until the late 1960s and early 1970s that the tradition

¹The work of George Lewis, Mike Hefley and the bi-lingual *Echtzeitmusik* book excepted.

now recognisable as ‘Improvised Music’ came into being.

As George Lewis points out:

A field termed ‘improvised music’ has arisen and come to some prominence in the period since 1970. I would identify improvised music as a social location inhabited by a considerable number of present-day musicians, coming from diverse cultural backgrounds and musical practices, who have chosen to make improvisation a central part of their musical discourse. Individual improvisers are now able to reference an intercultural establishment of techniques, styles, aesthetic attitudes, antecedents, and networks of cultural and social practice.² [Lewis, 1996, 149]

But where did this ‘social location’ and accompanying music originate, and what factors contributed to its evolution?

By now, relatively widely documented through the work and lives of Albert Ayler, Ornette Coleman, Don Cherry, John Coltrane, Eric Dolphy, Cecil Taylor, Sun Ra, the Art Ensemble of Chicago and the Association for the Advancement of Creative Musicians (AACM) among others,³ it would appear that the primary motivations towards these new forms could be expressed in terms of various pursuits of freedom - relating to musical and artistic developments, as well as to the wider political and social context of the 1960s.

This section outlines the main contributing factors that led from swing jazz and bebop to the development of American ‘Free Jazz’ - a music nowadays arguably subsumed by the larger category of ‘Improvised Music’.

Socio-Musical Factors

It is widely recognised by critics, journalists, musicians and scholars that moves by (mainly black) jazz musicians, and as early as the bebop revolution of the 1940s, sought to redefine jazz as a ‘serious’, ‘listening’, ‘concert’ music - freeing the music from its function as dance, entertainment or background music, and its musicians from their role as functionaries - allowing them greater expression as individuals, to develop their own expressive ‘voices’, and to position themselves as artists in their own right.⁴

²Whilst Lewis’ terms are lower case, I capitalise them throughout this study, for the sake of clarity.

³See [Monson, 1996, Lewis, 1996, Lewis, 2007, Collin, 2007, Dean, 1991, Jost, 1994, Litweiler, 1988, Berendt, 1980, Berendt, 1991, Litweiler, 1994, Broecking, 2010, Brown, 2010, Lippegaus, 2011, Porter, 1999, DeVito and Coltrane, 2012]

⁴Contrary to classical music, where it could be said that the role of the performer is to interpret the intention of the composer as opposed to embodying their own message into their art, the idea of ‘having a voice’ was already evident in jazz as early as the 1920s, typified by the instantly recognisable timbres and phrasing of Louis Armstrong, Sidney Bechet and Jelly Roll Morton, among others. In addition to these expressive developments, DeVaux describes the evolution of bebop as a commercial phenomenon in relation to a revival of traditional jazz (the so-called ‘moldy [*sic*] figs’), and as a “mechanism for social and economic advancement, especially for African Americans” [DeVaux, 1997, 16]. See also

This proposition is perpetuated by the wider jazz tradition to the present day - exemplified by the music's move into concert halls,⁵ Wynton Marsalis' *Jazz at Lincoln Centre* programme, international festivals⁶ and silent clubs (where talking or dancing is not permitted),⁷ and in the words of bassist Richard Davis:

We don't care to entertain you [white audiences] anymore and play for your dances. Matter of fact, the music is so fast you can't dance to it. And we don't care if you want to come and hear the band, you got to sit down and *listen* to this music. It's concert music, and you got to hear it and check it out.

[Monson, 1996, 202]

Aside from the development of jazz as a concert music, however, it was not so much bebop, but 1950s modal jazz, that opened the doors for the aesthetic development of 'free' music, with musicians including Bill Evans, Miles Davis, Gil Evans and George Russell giving ever more freedom, agency and responsibility to themselves and their co-performers.⁸ In addition to having their own recognisable 'voices', these musicians reacted directly to bebop's creative limitations (in terms of harmonic complexity and sheer speed), elongating chord sequences, departing from the 32-bar 'standard' forms that had provided the backbone for improvisation up until that point, and shifting the music's emphasis towards the power of improvisation, the ingenuity of the improviser, and the present moment [Williams, 2009, Tirro, 2009, Kahn, 2007].⁹

As Richard Williams points out:

Through these changes, the music's structures were being expanded, which meant, in general, both a chronological lengthening and a reduction of incident within those structures. Improvisers were being given less material to work with, and more time in which to explore it.

[Williams, 2009, 19]

And this loosening of traditional boundaries was seized and capitalised upon by many of these musicians' successors - John Coltrane, Eric Dolphy, Ornette Coleman, Sonny

[DeVeaux, 1991].

⁵John Hammond's *From Spirituals to Swing* and Norman Granz's *Jazz at the Philharmonic* are early examples, beginning in 1938 and 1944 respectively.

⁶That take place in concert halls such as Berlin's *Haus der Berliner Festspiele* or London's South Bank Centre.

⁷Beginning with Minton's Playhouse in 1940s New York, and continuing internationally in clubs ranging from the Village Vanguard, to the Vortex in London, or Porgy and Bess in Vienna.

⁸Definitions of freedom, and other social models proposed from academic perspectives, will be explored in Chapter 3.2.

⁹'Standards' are those compositions drawn from the Broadway songbook, and used as a basis for mainstream jazz musicians, up to the present day. Bill Evans and Miles Davis' 'Flamenco Sketches', from Davis' 1959 *Kind of Blue* is probably the most popular example of a departure from this - instead of following a strictly defined 32-bar form (as in the case of bebop or a 'standard' composition), the piece used only five chords (or modes), allowing the soloists to play for as long as they wished on each colour, before signalling the next.

Rollins, Lennie Tristano and Archie Shepp (of the ‘Freeform Jazz’ and ‘New Thing’ movements)¹⁰ all gradually replacing conventional jazz forms with increasingly complex rhythmic figures (superimposition, interactive accompanying figures), advanced melodic and harmonic techniques (motivic improvising, chain improvising, polytonality, clusters, microtonality), playing over the chord changes of a standard (but never playing the melody) and incorporating various methods appropriated from ‘classical’ composers (Stravinsky, Ives, Berg, Webern and Schoenberg) [Dean, 1991, Berendt, 1980, Jost, 1994, Karl, 1986].

Music that, to today’s ears, was already superficially recognisable as Free Jazz emerged from a 1957 collaboration between composer Edgar Varèse and jazz musicians Charles Mingus, Art Farmer and Teo Macero,¹¹ and in 1949, Lennie Tristano recorded ‘Digression’ and ‘Intuition’ - generally held to be some of the first recordings of fully improvised music in the sense that, ostensibly, nothing was planned in advance, and there were no pre-composed musical materials.

Even at this time, attempts at fusing jazz and classical music were by no means new,¹² however, whilst Tristano’s experiments took place in something of their own social sphere,¹³ experiments in freely improvised music, and improvisation using the materials of European classical music, were becoming more visible and more organised elsewhere, with Gunther Schuller’s (re-)branding of these developments as the ‘Third Stream’ uniting such pursuits for the first time.

Judging by the breadth of musicians referenced by Schuller’s own writings,¹⁴ the array of musical talent united under the Third Stream banner (Ornette Coleman, John Lewis, Dave Brubeck,¹⁵ Don Ellis, Jimmy Giuffre), and the myriad of social connections

¹⁰Definitions such as ‘Freeform Jazz’ and ‘New Thing’ (both highly contested terms) appear to have been imposed mainly by critics uncertain as to the future of these new forms, and who were searching to define and categorise these developments before Free Jazz had emerged as something recognisable in its own right [DeVeaux, 1991]. This statement is of course tainted by the fact that Free Jazz was (and still is) a contested term itself, and I hope that the reader will excuse my decision to omit a full historical discussion of such terms from this brief introduction.

¹¹Low-fi recordings and more information are available online at [WFMU, 2009], these documents presenting a lively melange of bebop chords and phrases, played seemingly out of time and with no reference to any pre-existing song structure or chord sequence. Charlie Parker is thought to have wanted to collaborate with Varèse (plans cut short by Parker’s death in 1955) and Dolphy was known to be an admirer, performing the composition ‘Density 21.5’ for solo flute in 1962.

¹²From the still-contested idea of jazz as African-rhythm-plus-European-harmony, through Duke Ellington’s fascination with Ravel and Stravinsky, and works by musicians as diverse as Stravinsky himself (the ‘Ebony Concerto’, written for Woody Herman), Paul Whiteman, George Gershwin, Leonard Bernstein, Shelley Manne and Bob Graettinger (one of Stan Kenton’s arrangers) [Karl, 1986, Schuller, 1989].

¹³Several of now-important recordings were released only somewhat later, and many of Tristano’s more experimental performances took place in a weekly private salon.

¹⁴Schuller’s writings reference Duke Ellington, Lennie Tristano, Leonard Bernstein, Gil Evans, Cecil Taylor and Ornette Coleman, among others [Schuller, 1989].

¹⁵Although Brubeck’s name may seem an unlikely inclusion here, prior to his famous quartet with Paul Desmond and the notoriety of ‘Take Five’, Brubeck had studied extensively with French composer Darius Milhaud, and had composed several chamber works [Schuller, 1989, 15], as, incidentally, had Ornette Coleman - an equally overlooked period in the case of both artists. The more adventurous end

evident from recordings and concert advertising of the time,¹⁶ this movement is not to be underestimated in the emergence of Improvised Music and Free Jazz - many seizing the invitation to hone their compositional tools, while others applied these same techniques and materials to improvisation [Kumpf, 1976, Dean, 1991, Litweiler, 1988, Litweiler, 1994, Gennari, 2006].

Kumpf typifies the Third Stream's differences from jazz as being marked by:

1. Frequent changes in time signature and/or changes in tempo
2. Switches between metrically bound and non-metrically bound sections
3. Insertion of solo cadenzas free of tonality
4. Use of unusual intervals and harmonies (for jazz at least) while the jazz rhythm (sometimes adulterated or deliberately clichéd) perpetuates

[Kumpf, 1976, 19]

And from this musical hotbed, several new forms arose - 'free-er' developments (arising from fleeting forms such as the 'New Thing' and 'Freeform Jazz') eventually becoming crystallised under the banner of 'Free Jazz'¹⁷ - a problematic term not reducible to a single approach or attitude, but encompassing the activities of those who had left conventional forms behind in favour of new, classically-inspired developments, and who proposed a music free of structural or pre-conceived constraints.

Ornette Coleman had studied with Schuller, Lewis and Giuffre in 1959 [Litweiler, 1994, Gennari, 2006], and Cecil Taylor cited Tristano and Brubeck as formative influences.¹⁸ Both were central to the Free Jazz movement, and in the words of pianist Paul Bley:

Ornette solved, in a single swoop, a problem that had been accumulating for ten years... There was nothing left to play on songs... [they] had been worn out. [...] It opened up the player to be able to breathe when he wanted, to think what he wanted to think, and to pay as little or as much attention to

of the Third Stream (Giuffre's trio with Paul Bley and Steve Swallow, Don Ellis' experiments with free music and microtonality) is an area still considerably neglected by jazz critics and historians.

¹⁶The 1964 *October Revolution in Jazz* (organised by trumpeter Bill Dixon) united Cecil Taylor, Jimmy Giuffre and Sun Ra, and any discography of the period unearths any number of unlikely-sounding combinations - Ornette Coleman appearing on Schuller's *Abstraction* (with string quartet), and *The Avant-Garde* featuring John Coltrane playing Coleman's compositions alongside Modern Jazz Quartet (and therefore Third Stream-associated) bassist Percy Heath, and Coleman-alumni Ed Blackwell and Don Cherry.

¹⁷It is important to remember that these developments often took place not chronologically, but side by side - Schuller's Third Stream *Abstraction* (see previous footnote) was recorded December 19th and 20th 1960, whereas Coleman's *Free Jazz* (one of the most definitive Free Jazz records) was recorded the very next day, on December 21st. The musicians most characteristic of the 'Free Jazz' movement, although their approaches varied and this is also highly contestable, are typically best summed up by Jost's choice of musicians [Jost, 1994], or by the list of musicians on p. 24.

¹⁸Taylor, like Brubeck, had studied classical piano from an early age, and had studied the music of Webern, Berg and Schoenberg at the New England Conservatoire, while receiving a parallel, informal education in jazz in bars, clubs and sessions [Jost, 1994, 66-68].

the chord progression as he chose.

From a 1974 *Downbeat* interview quoted in [Meehan, 2003, 49]

And, seen from this point of view, initial excursions into ‘freer’ music were nothing more than a logical extension of practices already common in more conventional jazz, allied with techniques and musical materials from European Classical music, and the ongoing liberation of the improviser from performing for dance, entertainment and background music - these developments leading to to a gradual erosion of traditional structures and a new focus on freedom, personal expression and the intensity of improvisation.

Political and Social Influences

Already, these developments in musical structure, aesthetics and the search for ‘the new’ might appear enough to bring about a ‘freer’ jazz and new attitudes towards music-making. However, this doesn’t entirely cover the total set of circumstances that brought about Free Jazz, the obvious discrepancy being that the majority of the Third Stream were white, whereas the majority of Free Jazz musicians were black - the Civil Rights and Black Power movements of the late 1950s and 1960s serving as vital catalysts for the alignment of developments in white *musical* freedom, with those of black *political* freedom.

Section 2.2 will explore political and social influences in European Improvised Music (after all, these are more pertinent to the topic of Improvised Music in Berlin), however it remains important to relate these attitudes to those preceding them, and this section serves as a (very) brief introduction to the political stances of 1960s black American Free Jazz musicians.

Very little of the discourse surrounding the Third Stream makes reference to politics or any external social/political application of their musical developments, and whilst they were, nonetheless, concerned with emancipation and ‘freedom’, for Schuller and his colleagues this was very much a *musical* and expressive freedom, attained though combining “the improvisation and emotional power of jazz with the formal architecture of European classical music” [Gennari, 2006, 224].¹⁹

For black musicians connected to the Third Stream and Free Jazz movements, however, there was considerable precedent for politically motivated music-making - Charles Mingus, Max Roach and Duke Ellington having written, performed and recorded

¹⁹There are no overt mentions of political themes (save the need for better music education) in Schuller’s most famous writings [Schuller, 1989], but the acceptance of critics and theorists that musical acts may be non-politically motivated and ‘just about the music’ (or concerned purely with aesthetic/technical advances) demands greater inspection. This poses a significant challenge to now-long-established and more convenient narratives that all jazz is political or protest music, for example, and is, arguably, one of the reasons that this period remains somewhat neglected by existing jazz history literature.

works with overt political content,²⁰ and such musicians were already well-known for their performances in aid of the National Association for the Advancement of Colored [sic] People, the Congress of Racial Equality, the Urban League, and the Liberation Committee for Africa.

As early as 1939, Billie Holiday had adopted the song ‘Strange Fruit’ - “a poignant condemnation of lynching and racism in the South” [Fischlin et al., 2013, 29] [Saul, 2009, 10-11], and John Coltrane was also active in expressing his response to particular events (‘Alabama’, following the 1963 Ku Klux Klan bombing of an Alabama church, for example), as well as in spreading the more general spiritual philosophy that underlay his artistic intention.

Coltrane, not forgetting his position as a black man in the 1960s and that, up to that point, it wouldn’t have been acceptable for him to express himself so honestly or openly, claimed that “My music is the spiritual expression of what I am - my faith, my knowledge, my being”. And, simultaneously expressing his duty to share this faith and knowledge for the bettering of mankind, his outrage, “power” and “scream” were taken up by black militants as “the screams of history urging a fair accounting, a liberation from pain”, as well as, in Coltrane’s terms, proposing a utopian freedom that entailed inner and outer peace, and being at one with himself, humanity and God [Brown, 2010, 161] [Saul, 2009, 245].

For many black musicians, Coltrane was the gateway - Coleman, Cecil Taylor and Sun Ra purportedly seizing the freedom that he proposed,²¹ and elsewhere, George Lewis of the AACM (founded 1965) described another level of musical-political relationships, quoting pianist/composer Richard Muhal Abrams and trumpeter John Shenoy Jackson, and showing how, on a practical level:

The AACM intends to show how the disadvantaged and the disenfranchised can come together and determine their own strategies for political and economic freedom, thereby determining their own destinies.

(R.M. Abrams and J.S. Jackson, quoted in [Lewis, 2007, ix])

Lewis contextualises this statement as:

[An] optimistic declaration, based on notions of self-help as fundamental to racial uplift, cultural memory, a spiritual rebirth... in accord with many other challenges to traditional notions of order and authority that emerged in the wake of the Black Power movement.²²

[Lewis, 2007, ix-x]

²⁰Mingus’ ‘Prayer for a Passive Resistance’ and ‘Freedom’, Roach’s ‘We Insist! Freedom Now!’ and ‘Freedom Rider’, Ellington’s ‘My People’ are examples [Fischlin et al., 2013, 28-9].

²¹Saul describes them as “Sui generis, idiosyncratic geniuses at home in the future, waiting for their time to come” [Saul, 2009, 233].

²²The music of the AACM protested openly against the war in Vietnam, and mocked the American military and America’s perceived fear of blacks [Fischlin et al., 2013, 26].

And this general message and political conviction (calling for equality, voicing anger at racist oppression and dismay at Vietnam) was expressed in a myriad of different ways from musician to musician - in spoken texts or song titles; in an intensity or “scream”; in models for collective creativity, organisation or spirituality that proposed social ideals for future realisation; or structurally, in a music that represented a freedom from the restrictions of traditional forms of jazz, and elevated such musicians to the position of ‘Artist’.²³

²³It is important not to generalise too much at this point, alternative historical readings (such as [Gridley, 2007]) suggesting that Free Jazz’s connection to the Civil Rights movement came more from the press than from musicians themselves, and that the development of Free Jazz had its own independent history long before this came to be linked with politics (a claim that would appear to tally well with a reading involving the Third Stream, but problematic in the sense of defining a particular point where the Third Stream *became* Free Jazz (see footnote, p. 17)). Ornette Coleman also remarked that, although he defined his music as “anti-segregational”, black vs. white ideology hadn’t ever interested him, adding that, “Just like black musicians, white musicians were paid to entertain people. This was a reality of being a professional musician, and nothing to do with segregation” [Broecking, 2010, 13].

2.2 From American Free Jazz to European Improvised Music: 1960s Germany and European Identity

While jazz has been performed and consumed in Europe from ragtime onwards, it is widely accepted that up until the 1960s, European jazz was living predominantly in the shadow of its American forefathers - dance band and bebop musicians emulating their American heroes, and finding inspiration in records, concerts of touring musicians, and meetings with soldiers stationed in Europe during (and after) the Second World War [Jost, 2012, Cerchiari et al., 2012].²⁴

Accordingly, the European jazz musicians of the early 1960s were investigating similar avenues to their American counterparts, looking to the Third Stream, ‘Freeform Jazz’, ‘New Thing’ and Free Jazz movements, and gradually abandoning bebop, swing and modal forms in favour of more expressive models of music-making [Bailey, 1993, Heffley, 2005, Dean, 1991].²⁵ In Europe too, jazz was becoming legitimised as ‘serious’ art music,²⁶ and this was evidenced by changes in liner notes to recordings (which were increasingly accompanied by intellectual and analytical texts aimed not at the lay-person, but at experts and connoisseurs), as well as by an ever-growing number of festivals and concert-jazz programmes [Knauer, 1996a, 151].

With the late 1960s though, this was to change, with many Europeans (and Germans in particular) seeking their own forms of jazz, and deliberately and consciously founding their own European Free Jazz and Improvised Music tradition. As in the case of black American Free Jazz, these developments must be understood not just in relation to musical advances but in terms of political and social identity, and, in this case, this was directly in response to Germany’s wartime past, as well as an increasing suspicion of the American values and culture that had dominated since.

This history is well documented in German [Wilson, 1999, Jost, 2012, Jost, 1987, Kumpf, 1976, Noglik, 1990, Noglik, 1981, Knauer, 1996b, Berendt, 1980, Peters, 2006, Klopotek, 2002], with [Noglik and Lindner, 1979, Bratfisch, 2005, Münch, 2009, Blobel et al., 2011] providing particular insight into jazz and Free Jazz in the DDR.²⁷ However, in English, considerably less information exists - [Heffley, 2005] provides a round-up of

²⁴The French school of Django Reinhardt and Stéphane Grapelli is of course one of few exceptions to this generalisation of American influence.

²⁵In 1961 in England, saxophonist Joe Harriott wrote in the liner notes to the album *Abstract* that “Of the various components comprising jazz today - constant time signatures, a steady four four tempo, themes and predictable harmonic variations, fixed divisions of the chorus by barlines and so on - we aim to retain at least one in each piece. But we may well - if the mood seems to us to demand it - dispense with all the others” [Dean, 1991, 135].

²⁶The influence of French critics including Hodeir and Panissié was also important in the legitimisation of jazz in America [DeVeaux, 1991].

²⁷The *Deutsche Demokratische Republik* (former German Democratic Republic or East Germany). This scene was typified by musicians including Günter “Baby” Sommer, the Bauer brothers, Uli Gumpert and Ernst-Ludwig Petrowsky.

pan-European developments from the 1960s onwards, [Whitehead, 1998] focusses on the Amsterdam scene typified by Han Bennink, Willem Breuker, Mischa Mengelberg and ICP, and [Bailey, 1993, Watson, 2004, Prévost, 1995] detail the work of musicians in the UK.²⁸ More recently, [Hopkins, 2013] collates video interviews of first-generation musicians such as Keith Rowe, Eddie Prévost and Evan Parker, alongside younger improvisers,²⁹ and occasional articles in magazines such as the *Wire* (such as [Keenan, 2012a, Keenan, 2012b]) provide additional background material.

This section draws on these materials to explore the musical, social and political identities of Europe's musicians of the late 1960s, and here I deliberately invert the structure of Section 2.1 - beginning with the political and social reasons for the musical developments that followed.

Political and Social Influences: Europe

Seen from a certain point of view, the development of a European jazz was nothing more than a logical extension of the freedom of expression that the American jazz musicians of Chapter 2.1 had previously fought for - the right to express their voices, identities and experiences, and the right to be considered 'artists' as opposed to 'entertainers'. Accordingly, as trombonist Albert Mangelsdorff put it:

Every art form is an expression of its time and a reflection of its world. The jazz musician in Europe should therefore not play like a black musician in New York or Chicago, he shouldn't try to, and one shouldn't expect him to, because his problems are simply different and his life's sphere subject to different forces... I believe that many European jazz musicians don't make use of [jazz's] freedom enough to express themselves, their personalities - they are in awe of the musical models of their idols.

[Heffley, 2005, 32], German original in [Knauer, 1996a, 147]

The life-spheres of black Americans and white Europeans during this period were, of course, significantly different - instead of dealing with the Ku Klux Klan and the rising Civil Rights movement, Germany was coming to terms with its Nazi past, and reacting to a post-war reverence and respect for America which was rapidly being eroded by closer observations of racism in the USA, as well as America's military intervention in Vietnam. As Klaus Kürvers put it:³⁰

Here in Germany, people in all leading positions, the judges, lawyers, our

²⁸David Toop's forthcoming work on the Improvised Music tradition also promises to contribute significantly to this field.

²⁹John Butcher, Toshimaru Nakamura, Otomo Yoshihide and members of *Polwechsel*.

³⁰Kürvers is a Berlin-based bassist, archivist and historian, born 1950, and who was present at many of the first wave of Free Jazz performances around Köln and Wuppertal (he is still personally acquainted with several first generation European improvisers).

teachers, were all somehow still involved with the Nazi regime. [...] We belonged to the first generation [who] hadn't been exposed to a [Nazi] ideological education. [...]

Up until 1968, America had been a shining example to us, but this broke with the Vietnam war. [...] This democratic model had been our inspiration... [but] I'd noticed that there were at least 2 Americas - a relatively racist country of black and white, but also [with] the pictures from Vietnam that were on the news every night... the idea of America, and American culture as a beacon of inspiration, was over.

[Interview with Klaus Kürvers]

By 1968, this anger and tension had reached a critical point (intensified by the police shooting of student-leader Rudi Dutschke and culminating in the Student Riots of the same year), and in Germany (as well as further afield) many young people began to look towards Communism and Socialism, as well as Buddhism, Taoism and the hippy movement for alternative social models and ways of life.³¹

Within this wider context, Free Jazz (the music that perhaps most brutally challenged traditional musical conventions and whose power and 'scream' had already become the perfect protest music for many African Americans)³² became the preferred musical expression of a certain group of white European musicians, critics, activists and listeners.³³ And their own problems and tensions became musically embodied in a variety of different ways, whilst being capitalised on (to various degrees) by a similar range of politically-minded critics and commentators - Wilhelm Liefeland declaring that German Free Jazz stood, "Against capitalism, on the field of capitalism" [Heffley, 2005, 95] and Joachim Ernst Berendt dedicating his life to the music, with the assertion that:

Society simply must change if we're to overcome [the Second World War], and with the hope that music can help.³⁴

³¹This was one year after the Summer of Love and one year before Woodstock. Feelings on these matters even ran so deep as to create divisions between colleagues and friends - the disagreements in England between Eddie Prévoist and fellow AMM members a particularly good example [Prévoist, 1995, 20-24].

³²See p. 29 for more on Coltrane's 'scream'. These developments should also be seen in a wider socio-musical context that includes protest songs by folk and soul artists including Bob Dylan and Jimi Hendrix.

³³Heffley describes this transition as, "The music created by oppressed Black Americans, then adopted by disaffected European... youth with radical leftist leanings" [Heffley, 2005, 164].

³⁴Berendt (1922-2000) was a German broadcaster, critic, journalist, record producer and tour/concert promoter central to the history and wider dissemination of the first wave of Improvised Music and Free Jazz in Europe, as well as being one of the founders of *Südwestfunk* in 1945. His background was particularly strong, being the son of an evangelical pastor who was arrested several times by the Nazis and who was eventually murdered in the Dachau concentration camp. His father, who knew little about jazz, approved of the young Berendt's jazz-convictions simply because, "If the Nazis don't like it, then it must be good music", and the young Berendt found jazz's message of freedom, resistance and protest to be exactly the same as what his father was preaching [Berendt, 1996, 269].

[Berendt, 1996, 271]

For Berendt, Free Jazz was far beyond the limitations of simple left/right political delineations, describing how:

Jazz provides a superstructure... for everything that we expect from modern society: freedom, and an individuality that relates to the whole, serving the whole. And all of this with intensity and fun.

[Berendt, 1996, 274-5]

And in the same spirit, championing individual expression, Heffley argues that:

The act of music-making, especially free improvisation, demands a continuous self-fulfillment and development of one's highest (and most unblocked, most accessible) potential; the entire human being, in all personal and collective contexts, is called on to find its unfoldment in the terms of the art; there is no question of role-playing - of 'performance,' in the sense that both cultural theorists and interpreters of pieces and genres use the word.³⁵

[Heffley, 2005, 57]

Others, however, were more specific in their politics - Peter Brötzmann describing how he considered:

Every sound as potentially musical; and to ply that to the energy and openness of both the free-jazz [*sic*] movement and spirit of the radical-leftist student activism in the 1960s - art as politics as anti-*Kultur*.³⁶

[Heffley, 2005, 138]

And elsewhere, the saxophonist made a direct connection between his music and his vision of Communism:

I have a very naive, very idealistic notion of Communism [and] there are certainly conscious parallels with what we are doing in the music. In the music, we are the only ones in the position to establish a whole society based on mutual respect.³⁷

[Bauer and Brötzmann, 2012, 24]

³⁵Heffley added, in personal communication, that in Germany, "They all struck me, *Wessis* [West Germans] and *Ossis* [East Germans] both, as pretty much the same kind of international youth culture people as my own Berkeley-San Francisco hippy culture, with the same general political/cultural consciousness, and disdain for both capitalist and communist regimes for the same reasons - pretty much like today's Arab Spring and OWS [Occupy Wall Street] versions" [Heffley, 2012].

³⁶The term '*Kultur*' presumably implies the mainstream post-WWII culture of 1960s Germany, as described by Kürvers on p. 32.

³⁷Brötzmann also pointed to the influence of Communism in relation to the decision to self-release his first record on his own label (paid for by his earnings as a visual artist and designer), describing how, "at the time - old Communist - we wanted to hold the tools [of production] in our own hands" [Brötzmann, 2011, 8]

Just as in discussions incorporating the non-political Third Stream into the narrative of American Free Jazz, however, any attempt to generalise German Free Jazz as a homogeneously ‘political’ artform would be problematic - Brötzmann representing one extreme, others finding it more difficult to put the relationship of their music and politics into words,³⁸ and a third group appearing apolitical (not expressing any political motivations at all, or at least not publicly).

Heffley asserts that many musicians were united by “a leftist history to some degree” [Heffley, 2005, 165], however, the discourse surrounding pianist Alexander von Schlippenbach is a good example of a musician for which this position is unclear - not making any explicit reference to politics, and presenting a position more akin to that of the Third Stream (freedom and emancipation being musical, or aesthetic).³⁹

For now then, leaving aside the problems this poses from a historical point of view, and identifying the subject of Improvised Music’s relationship to politics as worthy of significant (re-)examination from a contemporary perspective, this section now turns to the musical and aesthetic advances explored by these same musicians - regardless of their politics, and focussing on 1960s Germany and Europe beyond.

Germany: *Emanzipation*, *Kaputtspielphase* and Improvised Music

Practically all of the writers cited in this chapter agree that German (and European) Free Jazz came into its own between 1966-1968, with the first releases from Peter Brötzmann, the founding of Alexander von Schlippenbach’s *Globe Unity Orchestra*, and Albert Mangelsdorff, Manfred Schoof, Gunter Hampel and Wolfgang Dauner all bursting forth with individual propositions which Wolfram Knauer argued would provide a unified and fitting definition of the new ‘Free Jazz’ (pronounced, this time, with a distinctly German accent).

Heffley argues that this was when “the music and musicians moved away from that (mostly African-) American shadow and into a sense of themselves” and, for Berendt, this marked the end of imitation and plagiarism of American jazz in Germany and Europe, creating a range of expressions that formed the basis of the rich and varied 1970s Improvised Music scene that George Lewis described on page 24 [Berendt, 1980, 215] [Heffley, 2005, 26] [Knauer, 1996a, 151].

Even by this time, the European music had arguably developed far beyond its American forms - often rejecting aesthetic traces of jazz entirely, and using sound- and noise-based

³⁸See [Berendt, 1980, 74].

³⁹See p. 28 for more on politics and the Third Stream. Bley’s comments regarding the exhausted jazz standards tradition (p. 27) were echoed in Europe by bassist Peter Kowald’s observation that, “The musical situation that we first encountered at the beginning of the 1960s simply didn’t offer any potential for evolution” [Noglik, 1981, 431-2].

materials, serial and post-serial (a)tonal devices, extended techniques, string instruments and electronics in its place. In doing so, the way was paved for what was to become known as ‘Free Improvisation’, ‘Open Improvisation’, ‘Free Improvised Music’, ‘Improvised Music’ and ‘Non-Idiomatic Improvisation’, and at this point, and with exceptions only in the AACM and Art Ensemble of Chicago, such ‘free’ Improvised Music was to remain a distinctly European proposition.⁴⁰

In Germany, this period was known as the *Emanzipation* (literally, The Emancipation), and Knauer (writing from a later standpoint) summarises the key discourses of the time - concreting, yet building upon, many of the assertions of the Americans that came before, and offering a new definition of freedom, specific to these emerging forms:

1. Musical freedom and emancipation from traditional precepts and rules offer the possibility for each individual to make an individual musical statement.
2. Musical freedom, however, means the freedom to manipulate musical material, not a total rejection of structure or tradition.
3. Compositional methods from contemporary music offer themselves towards the structuring of free improvisation, providing inspiration rather than being applied literally.
4. - and, at the same time, the opposite - that musical freedom means the conscious and total rebuttal of all forms of premeditated structure and tradition. And that this hard-earned freedom simply *must* be taken, and exploited to its fullest extent, whatever that should mean.
5. The intensive communication between improvising musicians and the demands this places upon the audience calls for new forms of presentation for this music - longer sets, the development of new performance spaces, and self-organisation of record production and record labels.

[Knauer, 1996a, 155]

It is also essential to note that these developments didn’t necessarily mean an entire rebuttal of American jazz, rather that:

Every young musician must mix his own roots and experiences with those of American jazz, and in doing so, find a concept valid for himself.

[Knauer, 1996a, 155]

⁴⁰See [Lewis, 2007, Lewis, 2006, Lock, 1989, Lock, 2008] for more on the Chicago school, which included musicians such as Anthony Braxton, George Lewis and Roscoe Mitchell and where parallels to the European story are easily found in the adoption of devices from European classical music in particular. Such developments were to become more commonplace in the USA with the New York downtown scene of the 1980s (see p. 47), and it is also important to point out that all the terms listed here are considered somewhat problematic by almost all practitioners, forming an ongoing source of debate and disagreement since their emergence [Bailey, 1993, 83]. A historical examination of these terms and precise definitions of each (if indeed any can be drawn) falls beyond the scope of this introduction.

And nor did these changes represent a total descent into chaos, aleatoric music or anarchy, with most musicians labelling the emerging “Free Jazz” as nothing more than a “free-er jazz” and describing the *Emanzipation* not as a total (or absolute) emancipation, but as a liberation from “a whole series of traditions and ideals” (relative to the existing jazz tradition) [Knauer, 1996a, 151].

In an interview in Jazz Podium in 1966, Brötzmann clarified his own shift:

What was signified up until now by ‘swing’ also exists in our music, but now it doesn’t mean that the intensity is rhythmic, rather it’s much more to do with intensive *playing*. The music should just flow, uninterrupted, and the tension must never let up. The conception in our group is that everyone has the greatest possible freedom, and is obliged to use that freedom.

[Knauer, 1996a, 152], original [Blome, 1966, 216]

And in the words of Ekkehard Jost (retrospectively discussing the later, so-called *Kaputtspielphase* - literally a phase of playing oneself to pieces),⁴¹ these advances could be summarised as follows:

1. What composition there is proceeds idiomatically through the various creative processes of individuals, rather than through a single common paradigm or system, and then in clear subservience to free improvisation;
2. Definite pitch as the stable element of musical organization [*sic*] is now abandoned, now favoring [*sic*] unstable sound patterns. A structural distinction is achieved mainly by using collective variation of the parameters of the sound register, density and loudness;
3. The latter happens spontaneously, as a result of the group process, is not orchestrated by the composer-arranger-leader; development processes are being led, somewhat inevitably toward a limit where individual musical events cannot be strictly identified as such but combine to become a diffuse, intensive tonality;
4. The concept and structuring of time moves from one in which ‘swing’ was the guiding principle to one in which a very fast pulse (his example here is 300-350 quarter notes per minute) typically prevailed [*sic*]; and
5. Instrumental techniques are idiosyncratically conceived and developed to convey one’s own voice and vision. In the hands of a ‘real’ musician, these come across as innovative, inventive, and expressive; in players with less talent or authority they come off as charlatanism and inadequacy - the difference between the Emperor having no clothes and clothes so fine that only the keenest eye can see them.

⁴¹The term was invented by Wuppertal bassist Peter Kowald, who, pointing to the fleetingness of terminology in this time, later explained that “The term really isn’t good. Maybe we should make clear what was meant by that, and not use it any more. Actually we didn’t mean anything more than that in certain revolutionary phases of the music we set out to destroy certain conventions and negate traditions, simply so that something new might emerge from that” [Noglik, 1981, 431-2].

[Heffley, 2005, 135], original in [Jost, 1987, 57-8]

Influences and Standpoints

Whilst American Free Jazz could be mainly attributed to the meeting of jazz, European classical music and a growing need for musical and (black) political freedom, yet more influences were incident upon the European story - directly reflecting the variety of sources young people were turning to in order to re-establish their own post-war identity, and to separate themselves from the American-dominated way of life that, they felt, had been handed to them after the Second World War.⁴²

Just as in the case of their American predecessors, the search continued musically as well as politically, and in order to eliminate the aesthetic traces of American jazz remaining in Free Jazz (arguably a political statement in itself), Europe's musicians looked towards serialism and post-serialism, electroacoustic music, rock and 'world' musics, as well as to extramusical influences including Zen Buddhism, Marxism, Fluxus, Maoism, Dada and Surrealism [Noglik, 1990, Noglik and Lindner, 1979, Noglik, 1981].

In one key collection of interviews with 1960s improvisers, Noglik commented that:

This book shows again and again the individual attitudes, motivations, positions and intentions which are part of each musician finding his or her own music.

[Noglik, 1981, 475]

And these tastes and distinctions were manifested on local and international levels - amplified to greater or lesser degrees in individual cases, and leading to the evolution of several distinct (yet interconnected) expressions of 'Improvised Music'-making - each 'sub-style' representing a different (yet related) set of aesthetic aims, ideologies and influences.⁴³

In the words of British saxophonist Evan Parker:

The German thing is about the music as an expression of a way of life. On-stage, off-stage, it's all one thing: an intensity of communication which has to be communicated. [...] The English thing, whether you're talking about an AMM- or SME-type of approach, is in a way based on a sort of

⁴²See p. 33.

⁴³The beginnings of the European scene was formed of several small-yet-interconnected cells - mainly in Germany, England and Holland, but also in France, Italy, Poland and Scandinavia. Germany was a particularly important meeting point, Alexander von Schlippenbach's *Globe Unity Orchestra* (which at various points included Evan Parker, Paul Rutherford, Kenny Wheeler, Derek Bailey from England, Peter Brötzmann, Manfred Schoof, Paul Lovens from Germany, Han Bennink from Holland, and Jean-Luc Cappozzo from France) key in creating such connections, and Peter Brötzmann also described how he, Peter Kowald and Swedish drummer Sven-Åke Johansson (in Wuppertal, Germany) created regular exchanges with Misha Mengelberg, William Breuker and Bennink (in Holland) and John Stevens and Derek Bailey (in London) [Heffley, 2005, 40, 138].

group introspection. The rationale for doing anything is determined by a kind of consensus that the group itself generates.⁴⁴

[Whitehead, 1998, 56]

This can be compared to Whitehead's description of the Dutch attitude to Improvised Music, characterised by:

An ability to abstract from the music of American jazz masters; an impulse towards theatre, role play, humor [*sic*] and ironic distance from one's own creations; killer chops that make all the horsing possible, the virtuosity that assures any fuck-up is deliberate; [and] a certain clunkiness Louis Andriessen calls 'lousy Dutch wooden-shoe timing'.

[Whitehead, 1998, 4-5]

And, on a local level, even finer differences persisted - in England, the "dynamic, active and varied" sound-world of the MIC (Music Improvisation Company) remaining linked to American and European Free Jazz, whereas the SME (Spontaneous Music Ensemble) specialised in a "Cage-ian universe of small, refined sounds", and AMM maintained "the most overt link to the European and American avant-garde concert music community" [Heffley, 2005, 90]. Elsewhere, these distinctions took yet different forms, and in Germany a considerable amount of discourse focussed on the opposing poles of Alexander von Schlippenbach and Manfred Schoof (who combined free improvisation with compositional forms drawing on contemporary classical music) and Peter Brötzmann and Peter Kowald (who abandoned such pre-meditated compositional structures altogether) [Knauer, 1996a, 151].

Whilst many, like Noglik, insist that the influences and inspirations resulting in this range of musical practices were as numerous and unique as the musicians making it, I argue that a closer reading of the existing literature reveals just a few key inspirations - these influences referenced repeatedly though the literature, and the combination of these, along with the American Free Jazz covered in Chapter 2.1 and the political context discussed on page 32, clearly governing the musical results in each case. A summary of these four main influences on late-1960s/early-1970s European Improvised Music concludes this section.

⁴⁴AMM (founded in 1965) was originally comprised of Eddie Prévoist, guitarist Keith Rowe and saxophonist Lou Gare, before Cornelius Cardew joined in 1966. The group went on to have many different incarnations (Prévoist is the only consistent member throughout the group's history) and the origins of the name remain unclear, Rowe describing how, "The letters AMM stand for something, but as you probably know it's a secret! You have to remember that the beginning of AMM was quite complex. It still is complex." [Rowe and Warburton, 2001, Prévoist, 1995, Prévoist, 2011]. SME (Spontaneous Music Ensemble, founded 1966) was an ensemble centred around drummer John Stevens and saxophonist Trevor Watts [Heffley, 2005, 89].

Visual Art and Fluxus

Whilst visual art had long been an influence on jazz musicians,⁴⁵ the connection between art and music was to extend yet further in late-1960s Europe - the Fluxus movement, in particular, becoming an important influence on Europe's improvisers.

The Fluxus movement was a somewhat disparate group of musicians, visual and performance artists who drew extensively on the work of John Cage,⁴⁶ as well as the Futurists, Surrealists and Dadaists, proposing an end to the separation of art and everyday life, the artist and the public, and purposefully setting out to redefine the boundaries of what might, or might not, be considered art - using everyday objects, materials and actions in the process [Smith, 1998, Higgins, 2002].

Peter Brötzmann considered himself a Fluxus artist as opposed to a musician (like Sven-Åke Johansson and Han Bennink, Brötzmann was active as a visual artist) [Heffley, 2005, 138], and the movement's influence was visible on many levels - from the use of sand paper, garden hoses and other household objects as instruments, to performance practice itself - convinced of the need to be himself on stage, as opposed to donning a costume and *performing* or *acting*, Brötzmann's refusal to wear a suit at the 1968 Jazzfest Berlin being one of the most notorious examples [Peters, 2006, 210].⁴⁷

Public 'Happenings' such as those curated by Globe Unity Orchestra and Peter Kowald in Wuppertal's marketplace, and including local amateur musicians such as the *Wupperspatzen* (an amateur accordion group) were also testament to these interests.

Electronic Music

From 1973 onwards, Hans-Peter Haller, leader of the *Experimentalstudios* of *Südwestfunk's* *Heinrich-Strobel-Stiftung* commissioned workshops to explore connections between live electronics and jazz - inviting Manfred Schoof in 1973 and 1975, and Evan Parker's trio in 1974 [Kumpf, 1976, 36-7].⁴⁸ Schoof purposefully distanced himself from Stockhausen's experiments of the same time, describing his experiments as:

The opposite... It was a real collaboration. [...] We [conceptualised the pieces] together, like a true collective.

[Kumpf, 1976, 37]

⁴⁵Ornette Coleman's use of Jackson Pollock's *The White Light*, on the cover of the album *Free Jazz* (1961), or Brubeck's use of Miró paintings are perhaps the most famous examples.

⁴⁶Cage's 1957-9 composition courses at the New School for Social Research in New York are cited as seminal influences on the movement [Smith, 1998, Higgins, 2002].

⁴⁷The rules of the *Berlin Philharmonie*, at the time, stated that all musicians performing there must wear a suit. This episode was one of several factors resulting in the founding of the Total Music Meeting (see p. 44).

⁴⁸*Südwestfunk* was the regional broadcaster for Rheinland-Pfalz and Baden-Württemberg from 1946 to 1998, when it merged with the SDR to form *Südwestrundfunk* (SWR).

And parallel investigations into the use of electronics in Improvised Music were taking place in England (Parker and Jamie Muir in the MIC) and the USA (Steve Lacy and Richard Teitelbaum), with noise- and sound-based materials inspired by these new technologies becoming clearly audible in the work of European improvisers from the early 1970s onwards [Bailey, 1993, 94-7].

Together with the influence of John Cage, and the Fluxus ideal that any sound might be considered musical, this opened the doors for the inclusion of electronic instruments in Improvised Music, and many instrumentalists began to develop a range of extended techniques that attempted to emulate or blend with such electronically generated sounds.

World Music and Rock

In line with more popular or mainstream culture, explorations into what would now be termed ‘world music’⁴⁹ by 1960s improvisers were also not uncommon - the 1967 ‘Jazz meets India’ performance at the *Donaueschingen Musiktage*, as well as as the gradual inclusion of various ‘exotic’ instruments into the performers’ instrumentarium, both good examples of its influence [Berendt, 1980, 231]. As well as these collaborations, developments were inspired by tours to India, Thailand, Vietnam and Japan, and such tours were supported by the *Goethe Institut* and produced by Joachim Ernst Berendt from 1963 onwards.

Rock, and other more popular musics of the time, do not appear to have asserted such a substantial influence on German Improvised Music as elsewhere, although drummers Jaki Liebezeit and Mani Neumeier (who went on to found Krautrock bands CAN and Guru Guru respectively) were both central to the beginnings of the German scene.⁵⁰ The influence of rock, however, was greater Europe-wide, and particularly in the UK - Soft Machine, Henry Cow and Art Bears incorporating such elements most obviously, and Keith Tippett, Elton Dean, John Stevens, Mike Westbrook and Chris McGregor⁵¹ all occasionally dabbling in more rock-related directions [Noglik, 1990, 216-7].

Neue Musik, Serialism and Post-Serialism

To conclude this section, just as in the development of American Free Jazz, it is necessary to look at the influence of European classical music on the European Improvised Music of the 1960s and 1970s, European influences extending yet further into the realms of the classical avant-garde (Stockhausen, Zimmermann, Lachenmann, Penderecki, Boulez,

⁴⁹The term ‘world music’ has been used as a marketing term (or genre definition) only since 1987 [Denselow, 2004].

⁵⁰Liebezeit and Neumeier performed together on one of the first Globe Unity Orchestra recordings in 1967.

⁵¹McGregor had moved to England from South Africa.

Cage) and manifesting in the use of noise- and sound-based materials, as well as the use of microtonal and (post-)serial pitch material.

The 1960s was a fertile time for both camps - improvisers experimenting with graphic and verbal scores, as well as composers such as Cage and Stockhausen inviting elements of improvisation (or non-premeditated/aleatoric) elements into their work [Kumpf, 1976, 43-6].⁵² The groups *Musica Elettronica Viva* and *Gruppo di Improvvisazione di Nuova Consonanza* were formed of classical composers who were investigating improvisation as an alternative (or complementary) model for music-making,⁵³ and these worlds regularly collided through musicians working in both spheres, as well as at events such as the Darmstadt summer courses and the *Donaueschinger Musiktage*, where Penderecki was to hear the Globe Unity Orchestra and compose *Actions* (1970-1) for the ensemble [Kumpf, 1976, 94-6].

Just like the members of the Third Stream movement, several key figures were active in both circles, the most notable being Alexander von Schlippenbach (who had been a student of composer Bernd Alois Zimmermann in Köln) and Manfred Schoof (whose jazz quintet, of which Schlippenbach was a member, had performed in Zimmermann's opera *Die Soldaten*).⁵⁴ Trombonist Vinko Globokar performed as an interpreter of avant-garde classical music as well as in Improvised Music circles [Heffley, 2005, 57], and Cornelius Cardew (a sometime member of AMM) had been Karlheinz Stockhausen's assistant in Köln - scoring works such as *Carré* (1959-60) and playing in the premiere of several important works in the early 1960s [Maconie, 2005, 181].⁵⁵

Finally though, and elegantly bridging the gap between avant-garde classical music, Improvised Music and the Fluxus movement (and perhaps ironically, for the development of a distinctly European music), it is essential to mention the influence of American composer John Cage - revered by many improvisers not so much for his use of aleatoric techniques, but for his assertion that any sound might be considered musical and for the sheer diversity of sounds that his music employed. Echoing Brötzmann's assertions,⁵⁶ as Eddie Prévoist pointed out:

The ideas of John Cage allowed any sound-source material into music and encouraged a zen-like sense of 'nowness' that superseded formal appreciation

⁵²Aleatoric techniques, such as Cage's use of dice and coins to generate musical material or compositions where the form of the piece is decided during the course of performance, should not be confused with improvisation in the sense of the Improvised Music tradition discussed here. This confusion forms the basis of a long-running debate, discussion of which falls beyond the scope of this study. Improvised Music-specific definitions of 'improvisation' are explored in Chapters 3 and 8.

⁵³This music was not at all based on jazz or Free Jazz, was extremely rule-based, and as Kumpf put it, was "Not emotional, instead 'academic' intellectual, aesthetic [*ästetisiert*]" [Kumpf, 1976, 57].

⁵⁴Schoof's work with strings and the New Jazz Trio is also testament to these interests.

⁵⁵In the UK, Gavin Bryars, who played in the Joseph Holbrooke Trio alongside Derek Bailey and Tony Oxley, is another notable example. Bryars later abandoned Improvised Music entirely, in favour of composition, his most famous works including *The Sinking of the Titanic* (1969) and *Jesus' Blood Never Failed Me Yet* (1971).

⁵⁶See p. 34.

(and its attendant philosophy) of the western [*sic*] music tradition.
[Prévost, 1995, 12]⁵⁷

And, Europe-wide, Cage was cited as a seminal influence - Derek Bailey recalling drummer Tony Oxley's emulation of sounds from *First Construction (in Metal)* (1939) [Bailey, 1993, 88], and Dutch pianist Misha Mengelberg impressed by the music, Zen Buddhism and Cage's ability to smoke six cigarettes simultaneously, following a Darmstadt summer music course in 1958 [Whitehead, 1998, 15].

⁵⁷See [Bailey, 1993, 88] [Heffley, 2005, 77, 90] [Whitehead, 1998, 15] for further examples of Cage's influence. It is also important to remember that the idea of noise and sound as music dates back further still to the Futurists (Russolo), Cowell, and Varèse, and was by no means Cage's invention - even though he may have brought this means of making music to wider attention (see [Russolo, 2005]).

2.3 Berlin, the 1990s, Echtzeitmusik and Reductionism

Finally in this chapter, and to conclude this brief historical background to contemporary Improvised Music-making, this section turns to the arrival and development of Improvised Music in Berlin, and the city's growth into one of Europe's most important centres for the music.

Up until the early 1990s, the main centres for Free Jazz and Improvised Music in West Germany had, almost exclusively, been Köln and Wuppertal - East Berlin serving as a capital for the flourishing East German jazz scene,⁵⁸ and West Berlin separated from the rest of the *Bundesrepublik* by some 200 kilometres of guarded *Autobahn* [Noglik, 1981].

At this time, despite a small local scene, and Alexander von Schlippenbach and Sven-Åke Johansson's relocation to the city, West Berlin's importance rested almost single-handedly on the work of Jost Gebers (founder of the record label, FMP, the festival, Total Music Meeting, and the *Workshop Freie Musik*), and Gebers, who championed "hard-core, 'uncompromising' Free Jazz via sound tinkering through to the critical-ironic handling of the tradition", was responsible for documenting and promoting almost all of the now-renowned first-generation European improvisers (Schlippenbach, Brötzmann, Bennink and Parker among them) [Knauer, 2010, 19-22].⁵⁹

Despite Geber's work, and Berlin's already-leftish leanings, however,⁶⁰ 1970s and 1980s Berlin was still a far cry from the bohemian paradise of private galleries, hipsters and underground nightclubbing it is today [Klopotek, 2010, 65], and as a result of the fall of the Berlin wall in 1989:

At this point in time the relocation of the government to the new capital

⁵⁸Nowadays, these older musicians from the East are less in evidence in Berlin, mainly to be seen around the B Flat Jazz Club and Jazzkeller 69 (which is promoted by the tireless Wolf 'Assi' Glöde, who had previously organised the Parkhaus Treptow, one of East Berlin's most important Free Jazz venues, in GDR times).

⁵⁹FMP (Free Music Production) was an artist-initiated record label set up by Brötzmann and Gebers (formerly a bass player) in 1970. Also responsible for organising the Total Music Meeting and *Workshop Freie Musik* (a series of workshops, open rehearsals and concerts which took place at the *Berliner Akademie der Künste* from 1969 onwards), in 1972 FMP became a collective of Gebers, Brötzmann, Schlippenbach, Peter Kowald and Detlef Schönenberg, before Gebers took over the reins alone in 1976 [Knauer, 2010]. Comparable to Incus and Ogun in the UK, ICP in Holland, as well as Gunter Hampel's Birth and Paul Loven's Po Torch [Klopotek, 2010, 56], FMP was one of the first and most important examples of a musician-run label, orientated not towards profits and selling records but, as Wolfram Knauer put it, about "The contents per se... not about business, about selling records, about charts but solely and merely about music" [Knauer, 2010, 19]. The last Total Music Meeting under Gebers was in 2000, after which it was run by Helma Schleif and nothing to do with FMP directly, although many of the same musicians continued to perform there [Klopotek, 2010, 66]. The festival ended in 2009, when the *Berliner Senat* stopped its funding.

⁶⁰Young West Germans were given the option to move to West Berlin instead of undertaking compulsory military conscription and, even before the 1990s, West Berlin had a long history of squatting.

was a done deed,⁶¹ [and] word got around that there was - especially in the central east part of the city, taken by surprise at its own reunification - low cost living space en masse, [and] that a lot of urban spaces and structures were not demarcated, thus offering space for artistic proliferation.

[Klopotek, 2010, 65]

Accordingly, a younger generation of improvisers (typically born between 1960 and 1970, and hailing from all over Germany) began to congregate in the city - and just as Mangelsdorff defended his own music as an expression of himself and his time,⁶² here too, new forms of Improvised Music developed - the Echtzeitmusik scene and the so-called 'Reductionist' period of Improvised Music (which developed within it) both evolving alongside continuations of the European Improvised Music and Free Jazz traditions already discussed in Chapter 2.2.

This section summarises what is already known of these developments - examining the evolution of Echtzeitmusik and Reductionism, and identifying discrepancies and omissions in the existing literature that I will seek to rectify later in this study.

Echtzeitmusik

As the musicians themselves declare on www.echtzeitmusik.de, the website that, since 2001, has acted as both a social hub and concert programme for the scene:

The term 'Echtzeitmusik' was first introduced in the mid-1990s in order to distinguish the musical practices of a younger Berlin scene from music referred to as 'Improvised Music', 'Free Jazz', 'New Music', 'Experimental Music' and so on.⁶³

[echtzeitmusik, 2013]

Literally translatable as 'Real-Time Music' and, allegedly, inspired by the equivalent term in computer science, the most important documentation of this community (to date) is a self-published collection of theoretical, historical and anecdotal writings united under the title *Echtzeitmusik Berlin: Self-Defining a Scene* [Beins et al., 2011b], as well as a PhD by Marta Blazanovic - which draws on the book itself, and a handful of additional interviews [Blazanovic, 2012].⁶⁴

⁶¹The former-West German government was situated in Bonn.

⁶²See p. 32.

⁶³Nowadays, the Echtzeitmusik website also carries Free Jazz-related concerts typical of the FMP and older East German improvisers, as well as sound art and installations, composition-based projects of the Echtzeitmusik musicians, the activities of younger musicians playing at Sowieso and other Neukölln venues, and noise, drone and industrial music. The site was founded in 2001 (and run on a voluntary basis), by saxophonist-turned-organiser Gregor Hotz and clarinettist Kai Fagashinski, intermittently run single-handedly by guitarist and Labor Sonor promoter Arthur Rother, and is now run by a collective including Rother and other Echtzeitmusik-related musicians.

⁶⁴The book release was accompanied, somewhat later, by a 3-CD compilation on the Russian label Mikroton Recordings. Blazanovic contributes two articles to the book itself, as well as drawing extensively

German-language journals *Positionen* and *Auditive Perspektiven* provide further background information [Nauck, 2005, Beins and Renkel, 2000, Beins, 2006, Maschat, 2012, Beins, 2012], as do articles in [Klopotek, 2010, Klopotek, 2002, Wilson, 1999, Wilson, 2003] and the work of English-speaking critics such as Clive Bell, and bloggers Dan Warburton and Addlimb [Warburton, 2013, addlimb, 2013, Bell, 2005, Krebs and Bell, 2002].

Despite such sources, however, both the Echtzeitmusik scene and the FMP/Free Jazz-related scene of the 1990s onwards remain largely undocumented in an academic sense, as well as from an objective point of view,⁶⁵ in English, and in relation to the younger members of each scene. The existing discourse is heavily skewed by its more vocal members,⁶⁶ and the self-published works listed above have been heavily criticised [Williams, 2011, Warburton, 2012] - this situation calling for a more in-depth, comparative and objective assessment of the full range of Berlin's contemporary Improvised Music activities.

Whilst the aesthetics of the post-FMP/TMM scene, although encompassing considerable variation, are clearly linked to a continuation of European and German Free Jazz/Improvised Music (as defined in Chapter 2.2), concrete definitions of Echtzeitmusik are more lacking, and most existing attempts appear to be mired by an inherent fuzziness and a lack of consensus within the scene itself.

Over the course of fieldwork I heard the term used to refer to a social milieu (the scene's own preferred definition [Beins et al., 2011b]), a style of music (based on Reductionism),⁶⁷ or any music publicised on the echtzeitmusik.de website (as confirmed by informal interviews with audiences), and, drawing on the scene's own writings [Beins et al., 2011b], Christopher Williams summarises that the term was:

Described variously by contributors here as 'the great period of the Protestant hissing', 'acoustic microscopy', 'Party-killer music', 'a medieval village', 'an attempt to give the 'Other' another form', and 'just a word.'

[Williams, 2011]

Many musicians closely associated with the scene even rejected the label, guitarist Annette Krebs writing that:

Somehow I have never really liked this term, having found the sound of the

from it [Blazanovic, 2012, Blazanovic, 2011a, Blazanovic, 2011b].

⁶⁵I use the term 'objective' to refer to approaches drawing together a range of contrasting viewpoints, as opposed to those that present only one line of thought, or set of experiences (often written by musicians or critics keen to legitimate their own point of view).

⁶⁶Whilst it is possible to read plenty of essays by percussionist and electronic musician Burkhard Beins, there is close-to-nothing available from trumpeter Axel Dörner or clarinettist Michael Thieke, and in the (post-)FMP camp, whilst many interviews with Peter Brötzmann are now readily available, there is little (or nothing) to read from the likes of reedsman Tobias Delius, guitarist Olaf Rupp or cellist Tristan Honsinger.

⁶⁷See next section.

German word from the beginning, amongst other things, too unsensual.
[Krebs, 2011, 165]

However, terminology aside, it is indisputable that since around 1995, a new musical and social movement came into being in Berlin - somewhat opposing the FMP/TMM scene⁶⁸ and developing in parallel with advances in jazz, noise, electronic dance music, alternative pop, performance art and contemporary composition - many musicians fluent in several of these genres, and all of these approaches loosely subsumed under the Echtzeitmusik banner. The influence of the 1980s New York downtown scene (John Zorn, Fred Frith, Christian Marclay, etc.), who encompassed a similar diversity as well as having considerable interests in Improvised Music, was also felt - as was the influence of the German, European and American improvisers already mentioned in this study [Klopotek, 2010, Beins et al., 2011b].⁶⁹

From this point of view, even if a coherent musical aesthetic of Echtzeitmusik could not be easily defined, for some time, all these activities took place alongside each other - outside of existing jazz clubs and bars such as the Parkhaus Treptow or the Total Music Meeting, and creating a new network of musicians, audiences and performance spaces in the squats and unlicensed bars of abandoned Prenzlauer Berg and Mitte [Klopotek, 2010, 65]. Venues such as Anorak, KuLe⁷⁰ and (later) the 2:13 Club, Raumschiff Zitrone and Ausland all came to define the limits of the Echtzeitmusik-scene, just as Ausland, Labor Sonor (at KuLe) and Quiet Cue do today [echtzeitmusik, 2013],⁷¹ and these were all places where Free Jazz (and other jazz-related musics) were only rarely to be heard - the musical output of this new scene becoming centred on electronics, extended techniques, noise, avant-pop/rock, Neue Musik and performance art, and Blazanovic arguing that:

Echtzeitmusik doesn't stand for a new musical genre or anything like that...
it rather points to a certain attitude or approach to music-making, marked
by reflection, affinity for the unusual, curiosity, and musical radicalism.
[Blazanovic, 2011a, 29]

⁶⁸The suspicion appears to have been mutual, and despite early crossovers such as guitarist Olaf Rupp's albums for FMP and the 1995 Skyscraper Big Band performance at the Total Music Meeting (which included Rupp and Axel Dörner among others), Gebers is alleged to have commented that "the stage will be available to the young musicians as soon as they have come up with something musically independent and mature" [Klopotek, 2010, 65] (Paraphrased by Klopotek).

⁶⁹See Chapter 7.3, as well as [Zorn, 2010, Zorn, 2007, Zorn, 2008, Zorn, 2000, Zorn, 2009, Gann, 2006] for more on the New York scene.

⁷⁰KuLe is an abbreviation of *Kultur und Leben* - 'Culture and Life'.

⁷¹Raumschiff Zitrone (literally 'Spaceship Lemon') took place in the Lichtblick cinema, a cinema for 25-or-so people in the Kastanien Allee (otherwise specialising in dubbed versions of Godard and Buñuel films as well as a Saturday night midnight screening of Casablanca) and Ausland grew out of Lychi 60 - a basement rock club in a squatted Prenzlauer Berg house (before complaints from neighbours forced it to close). Only Ausland and KuLe survive until today in their original forms - concerts still happen at the Lichtblick but now under the names of AUXXX, Basic Electricity and Salon Bruit. See [Blazanovic, 2011b] for a full list and chronology of venues up until 2008.

Under this eclectic banner however, a distinct attitude to Improvised Music-making nonetheless emerged - creating an aesthetic, philosophy and ideology which came to be known as Minimalism or Reductionism, and a music that was essentially just one of many developments pioneered by the Echtzeitmusik movement.⁷²

Whilst this will no doubt be controversial reading for many musicians and listeners close to the scene, for the purposes of this thesis (and perhaps beyond), I propose the following working definitions of Echtzeitmusik and Reductionism - Echtzeitmusik as a community of musicians, performers and venues originating in mid-1990s Berlin (as described above), and Reductionism as a particular aesthetic (or style) of Improvised Music, which evolved within this social milieu. From this perspective, not all Echtzeitmusik-musicians are improvisers, and not all Echtzeitmusik-improvisers are Reductionists,⁷³ and I hope that this distinction will facilitate the ensuing discussion, as well as contributing to the way that this community and its musical practices might be discussed in the future.

With this in mind, then, there follows a brief exploration of the ideals of Berlin Reductionism, from the 1990s until today.

Berlin Reductionism

Just as the Free Jazz and improvising musicians of the 1960s switched their focus from chord changes and swing to atonal melodic material, microtonality and non-metric improvising, the music of mid-1990s Berlin moved this focus yet deeper - removing all aesthetic traces of jazz, and moving further away from pitch-based materials to the timbral and spectral possibilities of sound itself - taking this, as well as silence, as material for interrogation, research and exploration. As well as this focus on the microscopic level, more attention was given to architecture and form on the macro-level,⁷⁴ and as percussionist and electronic musician Burkhard Beins points out, criticising the models proposed by the existing FMP/Free Jazz/European Improvised Music scenes:

This older form of improvisation can develop in all possible directions.

It's simply a meandering flow of associations. It continually progresses in whatever direction, while in our case a kind of feeling for form predominates.

[Beins et al., 2011b, 143]

⁷²The terms *Minimalismus* and *Reduktionismus* were often used in German [Beins et al., 2011b], and the term Minimalism is employed here independently of the American school of minimalist composers (Philip Glass, Steve Reich, LaMonte Young, Terry Riley et al).

⁷³This distinction is also suggested by Klopotek and Eichmann [Klopotek, 2002, 89], [Eichmann, 2005, 21].

⁷⁴It is important to point out that many such aesthetic tendencies were already present in Improvised Music practice as early as the late 1960s, in the music of AMM and many of the British school in particular (see p. 39) - once again, these trajectories were simply extended and capitalised upon by Berlin's Reductionists of the mid-1990s.

In response, Beins and his colleagues⁷⁵ developed a music “as simple as possible, [but] as complex as necessary” [Blazanovic, 2012, 172], with Beins citing 13th Century philosopher and theologian William of Ockham as an influence,⁷⁶ and British tuba player Robin Hayward described how this was about:

Conscious decisions and creation of sounds - especially regarding beginning, end, and duration of sounds and their relation to silence, or the totality of sounds and silence within a piece.

[Blazanovic, 2012, 112]

Just as in the development of European Improvised Music from Free Jazz,⁷⁷ the influence of John Cage was evident in the use of sound- and noise-based materials as well as in a new emphasis on silence,⁷⁸ and these elements were often now used exclusively, in a music which utilised very little or no pitch-based material, and also often paid attention to the background sound of each performance space (integrating environmental sounds into improvised performances).

Figure 2.1 summarises these developments further - Hayward’s diary showing distinctions between Improvised Music in London and Berlin during the late 1990s (differences just as valid in a comparison of Berlin-based FMP/Free Jazz models and the new Reductionist aesthetic), and ‘inside’-pianist Andrea Neumann⁷⁹ described how, contrary to older Free Jazz models, Reductionism was about “not having to distinguish oneself as a soloist, [rather creating a] ‘group voicing’ ”, and that:

In a reduced music it is possible for me to concentrate on the sound of one of my fellow players and to add a sound that would enrich the first sound (in its frequency spectrum or in whichever other form). The moment in which one of two sounds changes or stops also has a strong effect. This effect that arises in the course of focusing on details (what happens when I add this sound to that sound, what happens when I suddenly terminate it or slowly fade it out etc.) is for me a motivation while playing.

[Blazanovic, 2012, 71-2]

⁷⁵The key artists in this movement could be said to be the members of the group *Phosphor*, who have also performed and recorded in several duos and trios as well as large group settings. Now mainly in their mid- to late-40s, Andrea Neumann, Burkhard Beins, Ignaz Schick, Anette Krebs, Robin Hayward, Axel Dörner, Michael Renkel and Alessandro Bosetti were all central to the scene, and this period of intensive work led to worldwide performances, also in the Neue Musik world.

⁷⁶The concept of Occam’s Razor directly inspired Bein’s thoughts.

⁷⁷See p. 42.

⁷⁸Cage is referenced extensively throughout the *Echtzeitmusik* book [Beins et al., 2011b].

⁷⁹Neumann’s self-invented main instrument, the ‘inside piano’, is, in her words, “the frame of a piano, just the strings, no wooden elements around it and no keyboard... amplified with a mixer and different microphones and pickups.” See also [Neumann, 2011].

Before Germany	In Germany
Going to look for things	Waiting
Sound as starting point	Silence as starting point
Flurries of sound	Single sounds, surrounded by silence
Climaxes	Quiet sounds
Expressionist	Non-expressionist
	Participation of environmental sounds
Would have been pointless if nothing occurred	Feeling it would not matter if nothing occurred
Interaction between musicians	Feeling of sounds co-inciding, rather than interaction
Short periods of silence, to mark phrases	Exclusion of normally non-musical movements
Tendency to follow group dynamic	Long periods of silence

Figure 2.1: Excerpts from Robin Hayward’s diaries [Blazanovic, 2012, 181-2]

The critic Björn Gottstein points to a ‘classical’ phase of Reductionism (at its most concentrated between 1998 and 2002), which developed in tandem with parallel developments in Tokyo, Vienna and London [Gottstein, 2011].⁸⁰ And it is widely held that this period was followed by a phase of less conceptual playing, during which many key musicians of the ‘classical’ period decided to play less Improvised Music in general - tending towards performance art (Sabine Erklentz, Annette Krebs), microtonal composition (Robin Hayward) or (re-)incorporating composed elements into their improvised performances as ‘composer-performers’ [Beins et al., 2011b, 123-150].

Just as with today’s Free Jazz/FMP/European Improvised Music scenes, it is unclear from the existing discourse to what extent *Echtzeitmusik* might be considered a political music. And while some clues perhaps lie in its origins in the Berlin squats of the 1990s, and in comments such as one musician’s online biography (“A composer/performer, working in the non-academic fields of experimental music”) and the liner notes of the *Echtzeitmusik* compilation CD (“It’s not about sales or audience members, nor about well-paid university positions” [Gottstein, 2012]), it would be foolish to read too strong a connection between the music and politics of improvising musicians in 1990s Berlin, without further research.⁸¹

This area too, then, is an area ripe for investigation in later chapters - from the point of view of both the *Echtzeitmusik* and (post-)Free Jazz scenes, and directly in relation to Improvised Music’s social and political roots, as described in sections 2.1 and 2.2.

⁸⁰Note the similarities to the pan-European beginnings of Improvised Music discussed on p. 38 and see [Bell, 2003, Bell, 2005, Novak, 2008] for information on Tokyo’s *Onkyō* (Otomo Yoshihide, Sachiko M, Toshimaru Nakamura) and London’s ‘New Silence’ (Phil Durrant, Mark Wastall, Rhodri Davies) scenes.

⁸¹Beins also questions whether *Echtzeitmusik* is a political music in [Beins et al., 2011a], leaving the question intentionally unanswered.

2.4 Questions and Conclusions

In this chapter, I have shown the evolution of American and European Free Jazz, European Improvised Music and 1990s Berlin Reductionism (within Berlin's Echtzeitmusik scene), as well as showing the clear aesthetic, social and political differences between each of these styles (or sub-genres) of Improvised Music.⁸²

Two themes emerge as pertinent and deserving of future research from a contemporary point of view - firstly, musical and aesthetic advances, and, secondly, the alignment of these new musical structures with social and political ideals.

Whilst much information is available on the first generation of improvisers and, increasingly, on the Echtzeitmusik scene, there remains the need for a study that addresses the younger members of both the Echtzeitmusik and post-Free Jazz scenes, as well as one that documents the unheard voices of both musics. Contributions in English are still lacking, and I also believe that in documenting these scenes, it is important to compare and contrast them to one another - making clear the distinctions which musicians and listeners use to distinguish between their activities, and asking if there *is* any such thing as a unified Improvised Music scene (on a local or international level), with shared ideals and conventions that underlie these aesthetic differences.

As well as today's musical developments, political and social motivations are clearly of equal importance - what, if any, are the social and political motivations of today's musicians? And do these intentions differ across different aesthetic divides (Free Jazz/European Improvised Music/Reductionism)? Do these existing distinctions cover the diversity and depth of the current scene, and where does the scene find itself today, some 20 years after the beginnings of Reductionism and the Echtzeitmusik scene, and some 50 years after the birth of Free Jazz?

What are the backgrounds of today's musicians, what are their influences, and what is the importance of European classical music, John Cage and electronic music today?

All in all, plenty of food for thought - and many questions to be answered in the following chapters of this thesis.

⁸²I will continue to draw on, and elaborate upon, these distinctions throughout this thesis.

Chapter 3

Theoretical Writing on Improvised Music and Improvisation

As a researcher and practitioner, my interests lie in making sense of contemporary Improvised Music-making in terms of its aesthetics, ideologies and practicalities. Before beginning my own research, however, this chapter looks at the existing critical and academic literature on Improvised Music and improvisation (in general), in order to identify what work has already been done in this area, and to highlight the questions arising from this which I will address in the remainder of this thesis.

In order to avoid confusion, I use the terms ‘Improvised Music’ and ‘Improvised Music studies’ to refer to studies relating specifically to the post-1960s Improvised Music tradition (as defined in Chapter 2), whereas the term ‘Improvisation Studies’ refers to the (mainly quite separate) field emerging from musicology and ethnomusicology that analyses improvisational practices in general, and which includes all musics involving improvisation.

I begin with a brief summary of the existing literature of both of these areas, and the subsequent three sections outline the themes that emerged to me as the most important, based on their contemporary relevance and their scope for research.

These sections cover the identification (and nature) of existing distinctions between Improvised Music practices, the use of analogies from social science and cultural theory to address problems of group interaction and individual agency, and a re-evaluation of the relationship of Improvised Music to the concept of Musical Works (drawing on Performativity and Cognitive Psychology). Each section will be concluded with a list of the questions that arise from this literature and that, along with the questions from

Chapter 2, form the subject of this study as a whole.¹

Existing Literature on Improvised Music

Whilst the existing literature surrounding Improvised Music is nowhere near so large as that addressing the more conventional jazz practices from which it evolved,² writing on the tradition (as defined in Chapter 2) is rapidly on the increase, both in academic circles and beyond.

The existing literature falls into three, rarely overlapping, main categories:

1. (Mainly subjective) treatises from musicians detailing their practices, perceptions and philosophies [Prévost, 1995, Prévost, 2011, Dell, 2002, Cardew, 1971, Oliver, 1993, Schick, 2011, Neumann, 2011, Fagashinski, 2011, Beins, 2012, Bailey, 1993].
2. Interviews with musicians, often by journalists, such as those cited in Chapter 2, focussing on biographical information, social and political ideologies, and personal opinions.
3. Academic work legitimising and explicating Improvised Music in terms of other fields, such as Performativity and performance art [Maschat, 2012, Haenisch, 2011, Soules, 2004], systems theory [Haenisch, 2011], German tribes and baroque music [Heffley, 2005], cognitive psychology [Pressing, 2000, Pressing, 1984] and the construction of identity [Sansom, 2007]. These texts are complemented by works from other disciplines that take improvisation and Improvised Music as their subject, including rights and ethics [Fischlin et al., 2013, Ramshaw, 2006], wider studies of creativity [Hallam and Ingold, 2007] and music therapy [Wigram, 2004, MacDonald and Wilson, 2014, MacDonald et al., 2012, Ruud, 1998].³

To date, there has been no published ethnographic study of Improvised Music communities or practices,⁴ and there are remarkably few ‘how to’ books on learning or playing Improvised Music (a contrast to the commercial market for jazz books and

¹These many questions are organised in relation to the themes arising from the existing literature rather than according to the themes which emerged during fieldwork (which govern the structure of the ethnographic part of this thesis, and how these questions are answered). While this may appear counter-intuitive on first glance, after lengthy consideration I decided that this strategy offered the best solution in terms of overall clarity.

²[Monson, 1996, Berliner, 1994, Soules, 2004, Fischlin and Heble, 2004, Macdonald and Wilson, 2005, Gushee, 1998, Brand et al., 2012, Sloboda, 1986, Larson, 2009] cover areas as diverse as performance practice, audience relationships, collective creativity, Shenkerian analysis and the creation of identity in professional Jazz musicians.

³The Canada-based journal *Critical Studies in Improvisation* (*Études Critiques en Improvisation*) [Fischlin et al., 2014] also contains texts from a similarly large selection of standpoints and disciplines, as do non-academic collections such as [Klopotek, 2002, Nanz, 2011, Wilson, 1999, Beins et al., 2011b] and John Zorn’s *Arcana* series (see p. 47).

⁴Forthcoming work by Amandine Pras, Matthias Haenisch, Joe Sorbara and Simon Rose will explore Improvised Music practices using interview- and field-based materials.

videos).⁵ Whilst other related (and similarly ‘difficult’) musics, including jazz and contemporary classical music, have been championed by the likes of Leroi Jones, Stanley Crouch, Theodor Adorno and (more lately) Alex Ross, it appears that no critics or theorists have committed themselves so wholeheartedly to the cause of contemporary Improvised Music and its musicians, whether in America, or in Europe.⁶

Improvisation Studies

Before proceeding to examine the discourse directly relating to Improvised Music, I should note one obvious omission to the above collection of existing literature: the rapidly growing field of Improvisation Studies.⁷

Improvisation Studies offers numerous studies in mainstream jazz⁸ and musics as diverse as Latin American Dance Music, Beethoven and Mozart, Indonesian Reciters of the Qur’an, Cantonese Opera and Hindustani sitar music,⁹ however there remains almost no reference to the Improvised Music tradition (as defined in Chapter 2) in this field,¹⁰ which suggests a clear need for such a study.

Despite this omission, however, I consider the tools of Improvisation Studies useful in underpinning any research into musics involving improvisation, and I will draw on two of its most important analytical frameworks throughout this thesis - firstly, the use of ethnographic approaches in order to unite theory and practice,¹¹ and secondly, the identification of underlying structures upon which improvised elements are based.¹²

I also take into account the following assumptions from Improvisation Studies:

1. The practice of Improvisation has been central to all music-making since the beginning of music itself.¹³
2. Up until their separation by the Western Classical music establishment from the 19th Century onwards (where emphasis was placed on the Work and the

⁵[Stevens, 2007] and [Lacy, 1994] are the most notable exceptions to this. While not being aimed at Improvised Music-making specifically, Pauline Oliveros’ listening meditations also contribute significantly to this area [Oliveros, 1974, Oliveros, 2005].

⁶The work of Berendt, Jost, Noglik and George Lewis, perhaps the closest equivalents, focusses almost exclusively on first-generation improvisers.

⁷See p. 53 for the distinction between ‘Improvisation Studies’ and ‘Improvised Music studies’.

⁸See footnote, p. 54.

⁹See [Manuel, 1998, Kinderman, 2009, Levin, 2009, Rasmussen, 2009, Chan, 1998, Slawek, 2009, Nettle, 1974, Solis and Nettle, 2009, Nettle and Russell, 1998, Small, 1998, Berkowitz, 2010, Bailey, 1993, Marr and Bailey, 1992].

¹⁰[Bailey, 1993, Marr and Bailey, 1992] excepted.

¹¹A gap also identified by the differing styles of literature identified on page 54.

¹²Improvisation Studies has already gone a considerable way towards legitimising improvisation, and challenging many popular (and some academic) beliefs that such practices might be inferior (to written/composed music) and generated by non-skilled, mystical or chaotic means - some of the problems with which Improvised Music is still faced.

¹³[Bailey, 1993, 83] and p. 23.

Composer), improvisation and composition existed much more closely than today, and were valued equally.¹⁴

3. Composition and Improvisation are not separate practices, but form the extremes of a continuum, allowing for cases where certain elements are composed (predetermined), while others are improvised (realised in real time), so that “discriminations between more or less improvised aspects of performance” are possible [Blum, 1998, 27-8]. Even the most ‘improvised’ performances rarely respond to entirely unforeseen circumstances, just as the most ‘composed’ also include indeterminate or improvised elements.¹⁵
4. Improvisation does not come about by chance, chaotically, by mistake or happen ‘Out of Nowhere’, and while it is still not clear whether this is the case for post-1960s Improvised Music specifically, in other musics involving improvisation, musicians often draw from a stock of pre-determined elements - whether in the form of underlying musical structures (chord changes, folk melodies, a figured bass) or learnt, practised and recallable materials, limited by genre-based conventions and applied ‘on top of’ these underlying structures (bebop licks, ornaments, embellishments, vibrato).

As I showed in Chapter 2, however, a considerable part of the evolution of Improvised Music and Free Jazz was the abolition of such pre-planned underlying structures (chord sequences, rhythmic frameworks, ‘standard’ songs), and this is where such an analysis of Improvised Music becomes problematic - are such structures and materials now entirely absent and the musicians are totally ‘free’ (if this is even possible), or have these conventions simply been replaced by other structures or genre rules, as yet undefined?¹⁶

Accordingly, just as writers of Improvisation Studies agree that the tools of Western classical music analysis fall short of explaining the processes and aesthetics behind musics using improvisation, I wonder whether the tools of Improvisation Studies fall similarly short when it comes to the Improvised Music tradition.

I therefore propose the following questions:

- Are there any predetermined elements or underlying structures in Improvised

¹⁴See [Fischer-Lichte, 2008, 189]. For more on the 19th Century rise of Musical Works and the cult of the composer, see p. 72.

¹⁵George Lewis points to John Cage’s description that even the most ‘composed’ works have “a unique overtone structure and decibel range for each performance”, and that, in such cases, the performer’s function is “comparable to that of someone filling in color [*sic*] where outlines are given” [Cage, 1969, 35], also quoted in [Lewis, 2004, 136].

¹⁶Studies in jazz also appear to place a somewhat exaggerated emphasis on motivic analysis, or on musicians ‘quoting’ popular compositions (or each other) [Soules, 2004, Monson, 1996, Berliner, 1994] - techniques that form but a small part of Improvised Music practice, especially in the case of musics based on sound and noise, or not using pitch-based material at all. See p. 66 for existing proposals as to structures possibly underlying Improvised Music practice.

Music?

- If so, what are they?
- Are these structural premises, musical materials, or both?
- How are they learnt or acquired?
- If there are pre-prepared elements, can the resulting music still be described as ‘improvised’?
- What (if anything) do improvising musicians prepare and practice, and what, if any, are the conventions that allow them to work together?
- How do musicians describe what they are doing while improvising?

With this in mind, I now proceed to discuss the themes emerging from the existing discourse on Improvised Music, looking, firstly, at existing distinctions between musical practices, secondly, at political and social models proposed by academia, and thirdly, at the idea of the Work concept as regards Improvised Music (with reference to Performativity and Cognitive Psychology).

3.1 Distinctions in Improvised Music

In Chapter 2, clear distinctions were made between various tastes and styles of Improvised Music-making - differentiating between American and European Free Jazz, as well as between European Improvised Music and 1990s Reductionism. Accordingly, it is immediately clear that the term ‘Improvised Music’ represents a range of historically and aesthetically connected practices, and therefore, in an attempt to evaluate Improvised Music on its own terms, each of these sub-styles should be evaluated relative to its own ideologies and aesthetic goals.

This section complements these existing stylistic boundaries by looking to other distinctions that theorists have used to distinguish between such different practices, and identifies the terms and structures that have been used to evaluate Improvised Music sub-styles to date.¹⁷

‘Hot’ and ‘Cool’, Afrological and Eurological, ‘Intellectual’ and ‘Pure’

From the beginnings of American Free Jazz, Jost identifies two tendencies underlying Improvised Music practices, and, paraphrasing saxophonist Archie Shepp, he describes Ornette Coleman’s “almost folkloric simplicity of expression whose roots... go back to the blues, the bed-rock of jazz”, as opposed to Cecil Taylor:

Whose music is marked by an unremitting tension between emotionality and a constructionalistic complexity that is due in part to assimilating contemporary European and American New Music tendencies into the language of free jazz.¹⁸

[Jost, 1994, 66]

Nogliki, too, differentiates between ‘pure’ and ‘intellectual’ musicians [Nogliki, 1981, 475], these distinctions form some roots of George Lewis’ Afrological and Eurological perspectives on post-1950s Improvised Music [Lewis, 1996],¹⁹ and Heffley and Kumpf separate ‘hot’ and ‘cool’ expressions, in the sense that:

Jazz as a music that from its beginnings was something warm, hot - an

¹⁷Chapter 6.1 will address these distinctions from a contemporary point of view.

¹⁸This divide appears to widen even further between Europe and America, Heffley distinguishing between Afro-American Free Jazz that harked back to the so-called “primacy” of early jazz (exemplified by Don Cherry), whereas many Europeans saw the evolution of Free Jazz and Improvised Music as “the height of, not an escape from traditional Western musicianship” [Heffley, 2005, 36, 40].

¹⁹These distinctions were doubtless in some part sparked by the division between African-American and European musicians at a problematic meeting at the 1969 *Baden-Baden Free Jazz Treffen*, by which time it was clear to Lewis that the two scenes were emerging as quite separate musical vanguards [Lewis, 2007, 251-4]. Whilst Kumpf and Heffley speak of ‘hot’ and ‘cool’ tendencies irrespective of race (see Figure 3.1, which also includes white European Free Jazz), it is also important to remember that these terms originated in perceived differences between white ‘cool’ and African American ‘hot’ jazz [Radano, 2000, DeVeaux, 1991].

immediate folk music, oral-traditional [*sic*], an organic bodily expression - engaging (sometimes confronting, sometimes courting) something cool or cold, in European literate-traditional formalism. [...] The music has oscillated between its hot and cool tendencies, starting with the dialectic expressed by the Armstrong-Henderson²⁰ and the Paul Whiteman groups, moving similarly through the Swing, Bop, and Cool eras. Free jazz - certainly in America, and especially in Germany - made its appearance as a hot [form...] something of a full circle back to the very hottest (most African) beginnings. [Heffley, 2005, 57]

Kumpf places these 'hot' and 'cool' tendencies in a yet wider continuum - the post-serial music of Boulez, Stockhausen and their colleagues on one side, and 1960s Free Jazz on the other (Figure 3.1).

	Free Jazz	Postserial Music
dynamic	the process (energy)	the product (the work)
tempo	emotional	rational
rhythm	intensity	cool
	spontaneity	construction
	linear phrase	structure-/material process
	loud, organically evolving	quiet, sudden differences
	fast, driving, pulsing	slow, static, no pulse
	also organic, unfolding in an arc	sudden differences, contrasts
articulation	mostly legato	varies, much staccato
instruments	mostly wind (breath) and percussion (heart)	strings, peripheral percussion
pitch	subjective, imprecise	objective, precise
composer/interpreter relationship	usually the same person	usually different people
way out of musical impasse	emotional expression	through the composer's material
fixed composition	usually only for ensemble sections	mostly flexible
variety of fixed codes	often orally transmitted by composer and flexible	explicit, on the score

Figure 3.1: Reproduced from [Heffley, 2005, 58], Heffley's translation. Original German version [Kumpf, 1976, 16]

However, these distinctions appear to apply just as well to the various sub-styles of Improvised Music identified in Chapter 2 - mirroring many of Robin Hayward's comparisons of 1990s London (Free Jazz) and Berlin (Reductionism),²¹ as well as many of the differences between 1960s American Free Jazz and the first forays into European

²⁰Louis Armstrong and Fletcher Henderson.

²¹Intensity/the emotional versus the rational; loud versus quiet; and fast/driving/pulsing versus slow/static/no pulse. See p. 50 (Figure 2.1).

Improvised Music.²²

These distinctions therefore require greater examination, better definition, and interrogation as to their contemporary relevance, and I suggest the following questions:

- (How) do these divisions reflect the practices of today’s Improvised Music scene?
- Does it still make sense to differentiate between ‘hot’ and ‘cool’, ‘intellectual’ and ‘pure’, or Afrological and Eurological Improvised Musics?
- Are these distinctions sufficient, or are more required?

Expression

As already suggested by the differences between Free Jazz and Reductionism, for example, the existing literature proposes two main attitudes to personal expression in Improvised Music-making. One is intensely subjective/personal/authentic/expressive, the other, strongly objective/removed/impersonal/introverted. The two stances rarely acknowledge each other, and this situation leads the reader into considerable confusion as to the conditions under which each is valid.

On one hand, Kumpf asserts that:

The free jazz musicians came from the psychic and physical moment: the need for expression, the desire to play [*spieltrieb*], and the liberation of energy and movement.

[Kumpf, 1976, 16]

And Heffley argues that “the entire human being, in all personal and collective contexts, is called on to find its unfoldment in the terms of the art” [Heffley, 2005, 57].²³ Niklas Wilson states that improvisation is “the expression of a relationship to sound developed over years, even decades” [Wilson, 1999, 11], and saxophonist Steve Lacy advises aspiring improvisers to:

Listen to speech patterns. Study actors. See how they say certain words. Study your own language. Say ‘Hello!’. What interval is that? Try ‘Sorry’. Which one expresses that? We are all different and we all have ways of saying the same things. The basis of originality is to find how you want (how you do) express yourself. Find your nature and see what you want to do with it.

[Lacy, 1994, 40]

On the other hand, however, Echtzeitmusik guitarist Arthur Rother describes how:

²²From this point of view, Kumpf’s homogenous definition of Post-Serial music is similarly limiting.

²³See p. 34.

It's beautiful when music has this abstractness. With this music, the sound is detached, in a way, from the person. [...] Even though the tones... are so depersonified, as a whole something beautiful comes into being, aesthetically beautiful.

[Beins et al., 2011b, 143]

Soules elaborates further, proposing that:

[Improvising musicians] must lose their identities even as they find them... [Improvising in this way] requires us to become nomadic - ready to move on, to relinquish attachments and preconceptions, to enter a space of temporary neutrality. There may in fact be a cruel contradiction in our discovery of improvised character: as we perform ourselves into a sense of authenticity - of authoring ourselves in our own voices - our performance erases the traces of our individuality within the ensemble of humanity.

[Soules, 2004, 269, 294]

Whilst Rother and Soules' views clearly don't correlate with those of Kumpf, Heffley and Lacy, however, the point is yet more unclear - even in some of the most 'removed' music, there remains debate as to whether personality, expression and authenticity nonetheless remain, electronic musician and theorist Ekkehard Ehlers observing that:

I was lucky enough to record Kai Fagashinski,²⁴ but if I had to put someone down onto paper, wanting to have the tone exactly as Kai played it, then I would also have to write down his entire personality and how long he's played and what he's listened to - I would have to write twenty pages for one single tone.

[Beins et al., 2011b, 139]

And again, this area of discourse requires more research - these differences remaining unresolved, and suggesting the following questions:

- Do today's improvising musicians aspire to express themselves, their personalities and their ideologies in their music-making, or is their approach more 'removed', creating music detached from the person themselves?
- If there are differing schools of expression, do musicians of both schools interact and play together?
- How do musicians develop such a personal relationship to sound (if such a relationship exists) or, on the contrary, how do they work to minimise or eliminate such expressive elements?
- What is the importance of 'having a voice' and representing identity in contemporary Improvised Music-making?²⁵

²⁴Kai Fagashinski is a clarinetist and composer from the Echtzeitmusik scene and generally associated with the Reductionist school.

²⁵See p. 24 for more on 'having a voice'.

Skill and Virtuosity

Returning to Heffley's point about Improvised Music representing "the height of, not an escape from traditional Western musicianship" (and discussions of energy and "primacy", as opposed to "killer chops"),²⁶ the final part of this section looks at discourses of skill and virtuosity - the question of whether or not improvising musicians can 'really' play, and whether or not just anyone can play Improvised Music.²⁷

An important counterpoint to Heffley's assertion (that Improvised Music is the highest of high art) is provided by Derek Bailey, who states that, "The skill and intellect required is whatever is available" [Bailey, 1993, 83-5], and the ever-increasing use of improvisation in music therapy also calls into question whether skill and education are necessary to improvise, and whether or not this is the same thing as what might (otherwise) be termed 'professional' Improvised Music-making.²⁸

Unlike Bailey, Pianist Joachim Kühn draws a clear distinction between the two, adding, somewhat dismissively, that:

[These attitudes] opened the door for a lot of people who didn't know anything about music, about the saxophone, or about whatever they played... you have to know everything about music, basically, in order to play free. I think I can hear it when a person is just blowing without that foundation.
[Heffley, 2005, 40]

And this raises a number of questions concerning the deployment of training, skill and experience. What is the role of training and learning in becoming a musician in the Improvised Music scene, and what (if anything) separates this from the experience of those facilitating or participating in improvisation as a part of music therapy? Can everybody improvise, and does the meaning of 'improvisation' require different definitions in each of these cases? What is the educational experience of improvising musicians, and how does that affect, and relate to, their musical output today?

More specifically, and from the point of view of contemporary Berlin:

- What is the role of conventional/formal/institutional training?

²⁶See pp. 39 and 58 (footnote).

²⁷References to 'fart noises' and the like remain perhaps the most obvious example of this confusion (see p. 19), or as an Amazon customer/reviewer of Derek Bailey, who had purchased the album *Mirakle* after hearing Bailey on an experimental guitar compilation that featured Captain Beefheart, Brian Eno and Spiritualized, put it, "The rest of the album also had me wondering if Derek could really play or whether he was just yanking ones [*sic*] metaphorical chain and taking everyone for a ride. He literally could have gone into a different recording studio and just mucked around without hearing the drums and bass, given the tapes to an engineer and then had the whole thing dubbed over the rhythm section... Any thoughts/recommendations on Derek Bailey and whether or not he is a con man or a genius would be most welcomed" [Werbenjaegermanjensen, 2012].

²⁸See [Wigram, 2004, MacDonald and Wilson, 2014, MacDonald et al., 2012, Ruud, 1998] for more on the use of improvisation in music therapy.

- Are there trained musicians who have rejected their education?
- Are there those who received training in more conventional musics and still work in those fields?
- Does it make a difference, as a listener, to know the other activities and educational background of the musicians?²⁹
- Are there also ‘untrained’ or ‘self-taught’ musicians?
- Do they mix with the so-called ‘trained’ musicians?
- Is it possible to ‘train’ to be an improviser?

And, on the level of performance practice:

- Do musicians know what sound is going to come out of their instruments all the time?
- What does it mean when this doesn’t happen?
- What constitutes a mistake in Improvised Music?
- Do musicians practice, and if so, what?

Sound- and noise-based Improvised Musics also pose particular problems for the listener who values skill - presenting scenarios where virtuosity might not be immediately evident or open to analysis in conventional terms (speed, loudness, realisation of a difficult task). And from this point of view, just as Frith suggests that performance art requires an audience of performers (or at least those suitably experienced and versed in the tradition) [Frith, 1996, 206], I also consider the following questions worthy of enquiry:

- How do musicians and expert listeners evaluate and analyse performance, and what role does skill play in this analysis?
- What, from the point of view of musicians and expert listeners, if anything, should be assessed instead of skill, and in what terms?
- Is a different definition of skill necessary?
- Does circular-breathing for 30 minutes and gently manipulating the overtones of one pitch constitute a similar degree of virtuosity to a lightning-fast jazz saxophone solo, or the performance of a romantic piano concerto?

²⁹That they can ‘really’ play jazz standards or Brahms.

3.2 Social Models for Interaction

In addition to the political stances of first generation improvisers and critics,³⁰ academic research has also sought to align Improvised Music practices with models from social science - attempting to explain improvisational interaction and processes in these terms. Such texts mainly focus on the relationship between the individual and the group, and attempt to solve many of the problems posed by approaches from Improvisation Studies by searching for underlying structures and conventions found not in musical outcomes, but in underlying social and psychological relationships.³¹

This area also reveals a noticeable gap between theory and practice - musicians, when expressing social aims, referring to political models (when they are politically motivated at all),³² and academia turning to sociologists and cultural theorists. In the case of academia, such connections are often unsubstantiated by field-based research, and such texts are often heavily generalised in their depiction of Improvised Music as a homogenous practice with common social and political aims.

As a result, the two discourses rarely use the same structure or language (despite often overlapping in content), and this section outlines what I consider to be the most important standpoints in the academic discourse, and the problems that this literature suggests.

Arguably the most substantial contribution to this field (to date) comes not directly from Improvised Music, but from jazz - the work of Ingrid Monson focussing on interaction in improvisation, and suggesting various social models to which it might be compared. Just as Berendt comments that Free Jazz might be “a superstructure for everything that we expect from modern society: freedom, and an individuality that relates to the whole, serving the whole”,³³ Monson draws on sociologist Anthony Giddens, noting the importance of a shared belief or set of structures in which interaction may occur, and emphasising the relationship between the individual, the group, and the role of the individual in the group:

Social groups are constituted and reproduced by the recurrent actions of individual agents, whose activities have both intended and unintended consequences. Viewed as a dynamic system through time... the day-to-day activities of group members express the norms, values, and expectations of a collectivity that extend beyond any one individual. The focus of cultural and social inquiry becomes the question of how the actions of social agents constitute, reproduce, and transform the social entity in question.

[Monson, 1996, 14]

³⁰As discussed in Chapter 2.

³¹See p. 56 for more on Improvisation Studies.

³²See pp. 28 and 32.

³³See p. 34.

Echoing the work of Burrows and Ramshaw [Burrows, 2004, Ramshaw, 2006],³⁴ Monson draws on Bakhtin, describing how:

On the centripetal side are forces of centralization, unification, authoritativeness (hegemony), and standardization; on the centrifugal are those of decentralization, disunity and competition among many social voices.

[Monson, 1996, 99]

And she argues that these forces must be reconciled in the pursuit of a “satisfying musical journey” [Monson, 1996, 27], comparing this to Goffman’s concept of ‘face work’:

A social process in which human beings act collaboratively to sustain a flow of sociability and save or enhance one another’s faces.

[Monson, 1996, 177]

In doing so, Monson suggests a very specific definition of freedom - combining personal freedom with a responsibility to the group (or collective outcome), and proposing a definition of freedom distinct from out-and-out anarchy or chaos (freedom does not mean that *anything* goes, nonsense becomes acceptable, or structure becomes entirely dissolved). Such assertions are echoed by several musicians, the composer Karlheinz Stockhausen, for example, criticising what he considered ‘bad’ Improvised Music, because:

Everyone played as loud and as fast as possible, and everyone at once... But that’s what always happens when people say ‘Let’s be free’: it produces chaos and destruction, because they have never learnt to use freedom as a means of restricting oneself, so that others can also be free.

[Maconie, 1981, 244]

And American saxophonist and composer, Anthony Braxton, agrees that:

Everybody wanted to use freedom as a context to freak out, and that was not what I was talking about. One of the problems with collective improvisation, as far as I’m concerned, is that people who use anarchy or collective improvisation will interpret that to mean ‘Now I can kill you’; and I’m saying, wait a minute! OK, it’s true that in a free-thought zone, you can think of anything you want to think, but that was not the optimum state of what I had in mind when I said, let’s have freedom. I thought any transformational understanding of so-called freedom would imply that you would be free to find those disciplines that suited you, free to understand

³⁴Ramshaw makes a comparison to legal frameworks in society, drawing on Ornette Coleman and Jaques Derrida to debate to what extent improvisation is ‘free’ and creative, and to what extent it is governed by laws that must be adhered to. The truth, according to Ramshaw, lies somewhere inbetween [Ramshaw, 2006].

your own value systems; but not that you would just freak out because ‘the teacher’s not there’. The teacher is still there!

[Lock, 1989, 240]

Reflecting Sansom’s call for the possibility of an underlying ‘psychological text’ (as opposed to a ‘musical text’) [Sansom, 2007],³⁵ Monson suggests the existence of non-musical underlying structures in improvisational interaction. And, drawing on Michael Silverstein³⁶ and considering emerging musical forms as a direct result of ‘metapragmatic’ interactions, she argues that reference to this wider context is essential for the construction of meaning, adding that:³⁷

The metapragmatic indexes in interactive improvisation... simultaneously generate musical shapes, interpersonal bonds in the ensemble, and intermusical associations for a community of listeners.

[Monson, 1996, 188]

Schütz, too, although not writing about Improvised Music specifically, looks to underlying rules and conventions not (necessarily) evidenced in sounding ‘musical’ outcomes, and he compares such interactions to a wrestling match or game of chess, describing this ‘Tuning-In’ process as:³⁸

A ‘conversation of gestures’ which enables either of the participants to anticipate the other’s behavior [*sic*] and to orient his own behavior by means of such anticipation.

[Schütz, 1951, 77]

This discourse, therefore, suggests several further questions for field-based research:

- How well do the social models proposed by Monson et al. compare to musicians’ own descriptions of their experiences whilst improvising?
- How well do these comparisons compare to musicians’ own social and political stances (and those of the 1960s)?
- Are musicians consciously thinking of their social and political goals whilst playing?
- What does this mean in the case of musicians who are ‘non-political’ and only

³⁵Again, this functions as a means of constructing, confirming and asserting identity within a group context - centripetal and centrifugal social forces once more in balance.

³⁶Silverstein’s field lies between linguistics, anthropology and psychology.

³⁷In other words that a musical structure may only be assigned meaning by the social context and structure surrounding it, the music itself just a trace of these underlying processes. To my mind, Monson and Sansom’s assertions suggest additional analogies to Chomsky’s proposition of so-called ‘nonsense’ sentences, such as “Colorless [*sic*] green ideas sleep furiously” (which is grammatically correct but semantically nonsensical) [Chomsky, 2002], and to Wittgenstein’s Language Games (which propose the idea of language woven into context and action) [Wittgenstein, 2010]. Both Chomsky and Wittgenstein’s examples rely on underlying structures which are not evident in the sonic or ‘trace’ outcome of the interaction in question.

³⁸Such strategies have been used by musicians, such as John Zorn, whose ‘Game Pieces’ use the rules of Tennis, Hockey, Archery and Lacrosse to generate (semi-)improvised pieces.

interested in ‘musical’ advances?³⁹

From an interactional point of view:

- What is the relationship between group and individual in Improvised Music-making?
- Does this relationship change in different contexts (is it sometimes desirable to place the expression or needs of the individual above those of the group, or vice versa)?
- Do different tastes exist within these bounds?
- Do different models for interaction exist?
- If so, are they compatible?

And from a structural point of view:

- To what extent is it possible to talk of underlying, non-musical, rule-based structures or conventions in Improvised Music performance?
- Do different rules and different structures underlie different Improvised Music practices?
- What (if any) expectations do musicians have when performing together?
- Does this differ between first-time meetings and long-established groups?
- If such rules or conventions do exist, how are they learnt or acquired?
- How free is ‘free’, or what does freedom mean in this context?

³⁹See pp. 28 and 35.

3.3 Improvisation, Musicology, Performativity and The Work Concept

To conclude this chapter, this section turns to a yet-different account of Improvised Music practice - instead of looking at the role of the individual and the group (and proposing a notion of improvisation based on individual agency within a group context), looking towards recent studies from Musicology which seek to explain Improvised Music in terms of Performativity and approaches from Performance Art [Soules, 2004, Maschat, 2012, Haenisch, 2011, Goehr, 2007].⁴⁰

The premise is as follows:

The generation of aesthetic products and accordingly the experience of aesthetic processes are only to be found in the course of real-time production and in the context of performance situations.

[Maschat, 2012, 1]

And, according to this ideology, all such “aesthetic products” and musical materials used in improvised performance are generated by an “autopoietic feedback loop” between performer(s) and audience - a system capable of reproducing and maintaining itself without any premeditated or external input, and with the active role of the audience central to its success [Fischer-Lichte, 2008].⁴¹ The aesthetic products generated (or “emergent phenomena”), whilst perhaps superficially similar to existing movement (or musical) repertoires, are then disconnected “from their larger contexts” or traditional theatrical function (repeating and developing free of association),⁴² and therefore appear:

[...] de-semanticized because they are perceived in their specific materiality and not as carriers of meaning; they are neither put in relation to other elements nor to any other context. In this sense, the elements are insignificant... Once perceived in their materiality, these isolated emergent phenomena trigger a wealth of associations, ideas, thoughts, memories, and emotions in the perceiving subjects, enabling them to make connections to various other phenomena.

[Fischer-Lichte, 2008, 140]

The use of Performativity as a tool for Improvised Music analysis, however, rests on several yet-untested assumptions - first, that improvising musicians and performance

⁴⁰The controversial German translation of Derek Bailey’s *Improvisation: Its Nature and Practice in Music* as *Musikalische Improvisation: Kunst ohne Werk* (lit. ‘Musical Improvisation: Art without Work’) [Bailey, 1987, Bailey, 1993] has doubtless played a part in these developments.

⁴¹The ensuing process and results are then evaluated and analysed in terms of concepts such as Presence, Aura, Contingency and Corporeality. Fischer-Lichte is widely cited throughout this discourse.

⁴²Parallels to the work of the Fluxus movement, John Cage’s approaches to listening, and the use of everyday materials and actions as the materials of art are also evident here (see pp. 40 and 42).

artists are doing the same thing,⁴³ and second, and contrary to Monsons' assertion that centripetal and centrifugal social forces should be balanced in the pursuit of 'satisfying' musical performance, that improvisers consistently value the collective outcome above their own personal expression.⁴⁴ Evidently not accounting for cases where individual expression might be to the fore, and also seemingly at odds with the importance of the hard-won personal expression called for by first generation improvisers,⁴⁵ such writers describe Improvised Music as:

A whole that is greater than the sum of it's parts, a whole that is an unforeseen coming-into-being of something 'new'... a collective creativity that cannot be understood in terms of individual accomplishment or ability, but instead as a social practice in which the central authority of artistic authorship is transformed into an aesthetic collaboration, one that is not reducible to a simple 'sum' or chain of individual creative contributions.
[Haenisch, 2011, 187]

In short, the direct comparison of Improvised Music to Performance Art and Performativity leaves the following questions unanswered:

- Are there cases in which musicians 'give up' their identity for the good of the group, or is personal expression more important?
- Are musicians performing themselves, simply 'being' themselves, or 'acting' as (embodying) someone or something else while playing?
- Again, does this change between musicians and scenarios, and are there distinctions to be made in these terms?
- Do different stances exist between the importance of individual and group expression?

The question of a feedback loop between performers and audience proposes the following questions in terms of uniqueness and repeatability:

- To what extent is Improvised Music entirely new each time, and to what extent is this a desired or realistic outcome?
- What, if any, elements are repeated, and how does this manifest?

And, in terms of constructing meaning, and the potential de-semanticisation of musical materials:

- Are sounds also meant to be disconnected from their usual musical function and associations - should a percussive sound be perceived as energetically as an angry

⁴³After all, isn't one of the common potential misconceptions of Improvised Music-making that performers are just playing for themselves and ignoring the audience?

⁴⁴This assumption appears consistent with Soules' or Rother's suggestion that musicians 'give up' themselves while performing (see p. 61).

⁴⁵See Mangelsdorff, Knauer and Heffley's comments, pp. 32, 37 and 34.

man slamming a door, the sound of an anthill, or as one might attempt to listen to the music of John Cage?⁴⁶

- Or, as Fischer-Lichte suggests in the case of Performance Art, is the Work created ‘open’ - the listener free to decide and draw their own conclusions and make their own associations with what they hear or see?
- What is the relationship between performer and audience, and do improvising musicians consider their audience whilst playing?
- And, if so, to what degree does this influence their musical decision making?
- Are all musical materials generated ‘in the moment’, or do memory, experience, practice and/or training also play a role?

The discourse, however, whilst worthy of greater investigation in order to test its foundations, nonetheless highlights other important areas of writing on Improvised Music - firstly, the question of being ‘in the moment’ (or not), and secondly, the question of the Work, and its relationship to Improvised Music, both live and recorded. Before this chapter comes to a close, there follows two brief introductions to these topics.

In The Moment

The first subject for debate here is the idea of ‘losing ourselves’ and being ‘in the moment’ - a Performative reading of Improvised Music practice calling for this assumption, whereas texts from other disciplines present a contrary view, placing importance on memory, knowledge, feedback and the use of pre-prepared materials.

The first challenge to the assumption that improvisers are entirely ‘in the moment’, and that all aesthetic products are generated therein, is existing documentation of musicians’ practise and preparation habits [Schick, 2011, Neumann, 2011, Beins, 2012],⁴⁷ as well as the work of Matthias Haenisch and Jeff Pressing, who point to the use of memory, learning, individual agency and experience in the improvisational process.

Haenisch builds on the limitations of a Performative approach (drawing on Systems Theory), and suggests that performers use conscious interventions whilst improvising - departing from the self-contained autopoietic feedback loop in order to introduce “experimental departures, modifications, enhancements, contrasts”, as well as highlighting the necessity of individual agency in shaping, stabilising or destabilising the emerging

⁴⁶Cage, considering all sound potentially musical, suggests:
To obtain the value of a sound, a movement, measure from zero.
(Pay attention to what it is, just as it is.)
[Cage, 1969, 96]

⁴⁷Maschat, a defender of performative approaches to Improvised Music analysis, also somewhat tellingly notes that, “The fact that improvisers fall back on certain pre-prepared basic materials and a wealth of experience is naturally excluded from the question of this text” [Maschat, 2012, 2].

structure [Haenisch, 2011, 191]. He also points to the fact that improvisation does not come about from an entirely blank canvass, arguing that:

The participants' collective 'culture' of musical practices, a common aesthetic direction, comparable musical experiences, and/or possibly previous interactions with one another serve to significantly reduce the total number of possibilities before a single note is played.

[Haenisch, 2011, 191]

And these suppositions, not dissimilar to the idea of an underlying psychological text for improvisation,⁴⁸ are borne out by the work of cognitive psychologist Jeff Pressing, who proposes that:

The idea of preparation is very important for improvisation, where real-time cognitive processing is often pushed up near its attentional limits. [...] For improvised performance that aims at artistic presentation, where discrepancies between intention and result must be kept within strict bounds, practice must attempt to explore both the full range of possible motor actions and musical effects, to enable both finer control and the internal modelling of discrepancies and correction procedures, including feedforward.

[Pressing, 2000, 136]

Contrary to the idea of becoming lost 'in the moment', Pressing identifies short- and long-term feedback as essential for motivational and attention-focussing effects, error correction and the possibility to foresee multiple outcomes (as well as in guiding ongoing movements, internal evaluation and decision-making). And this forms part of an ongoing process that refines "efficiency, fluency, flexibility, capacity for error correction, and... expressiveness" over a lifetime's work [Pressing, 2000, 135, 166]. For Pressing:

This involves the use of extensive redundancy, and also the aggregation of memory constituents (objects, features, processes) into new cognitive assemblies which may be accessed autonomously. Because such a procedure can presumably be nested to arbitrary depth, very complicated knowledge structures may develop.

[Pressing, 2000, 166]

And whilst Pressing's model for improvisation is somewhat limited by the omission of expressive and social/political aspects,⁴⁹ this discussion suggests the following further

⁴⁸See references to the work of Sansom, p. 66.

⁴⁹Pressing's underlying focus and tone is as follows:

1. Complex electrochemical signals are passed between parts of the nervous system and on to endocrine and muscle systems;
2. muscles, bones, and connective tissues execute a complex sequence of actions;
3. rapid visual, tactile and proprioceptive monitoring of actions takes place;
4. music is produced by the instrument or voice;
5. self-produced sounds and other auditory input are sensed;
6. sensed sounds are set into cognitive representations and evaluated as music;

questions for research:

- Do musicians aim to be ‘in the moment’?
- What is the role, if any, of conscious interjection or strategy?
- Do musicians move between different psychological states and types of memory during performance?
- Again, what is the role of practice and preparation in Improvised Music performance?

The Work Concept

The final discourse covered in this section, and this chapter, is the question of Musical Works, and whether or not Improvised Music (live or recorded) is to be thought of in terms of Works, and what implications this might have for its legitimisation and appreciation.

The Work Concept originates in 19th Century Musicology, the rise of the cult of the Romantic composer, and the idea of repeatability/retrievability (the Work should be recognisable and maintain its integrity through repetition). It entails that the performer should seek to recreate the Work as closely as possible to the composers’ intention (*Werktreue*), and that the Work itself (the score, and not the performance) should constitute the central text of musical analysis - each performance representing a more-or less-perfect realisation of that Work. One aim of the development of the concept of Musical Works was to elevate music to the status of visual art (legitimising the Work as a ‘serious’ artefact to be revered and admired, far from music’s previous functional use for dance, worship and storytelling), and the pre-history of its development has roots dating back to the church painters of the 15th Century and the beginnings of the idea of Intellectual Property itself [Goehr, 2007, Durant, 1984].

George Lewis translates and summarises Carl Dahlhaus’ criteria, that, to constitute a Work, a piece of music must be:

First, an individually complete structure in itself (‘ein in sich geschlossenes, individuelles Gebilde’). Second, this structure must be fully worked-out (‘ausgearbeitet’). Third and fourth, it is fixed in written form (‘schriftlich fixiert’) in order to be performed (‘um aufgeführt zu werden’). Finally, what is worked-out and notated must constitute the essential part of the

7. further cognitive processing in the central nervous system generates the design of the next action sequence and triggers it.

- return to step (1) and repeat -

[Pressing, 2000, 130]

aesthetic object that is constituted in the consciousness of the listener.

[Lewis, 1996, 96]⁵⁰

However, from the point of view of Improvised Music, this supposition is immediately problematic - in this case, not only is there no written score and no single author, but surely, the point of improvisation *is* that the aesthetic results are different every time? Dahlhaus' definition also offers no provision for partially-composed music, aleatoric music or "more or less improvised aspects of performance",⁵¹ and I therefore believe it is important to ask why such an approach is necessary at all, when Improvised Music already appears so far removed from these criteria.

Answers appear to lie (particularly in the case of German academia) in the attempted legitimisation of Improvised Music as a 'serious' art form,⁵² but also in financial terms for practitioners - GEMA, Germany's society for the distribution of royalties, differentiating strongly between *E-Musik* (*Ernste Musik*, 'serious music') and *U-Musik* (*Unterhaltungs Musik*, 'entertainment music'). Such distinctions lead to vastly differing royalty payments depending on the 'grading' of the music in question, and the classification of Improvised Music, primarily, as *U-Musik* was a problem encountered repeatedly during fieldwork.⁵³

In response to the problem of Improvised Music and Musical Works, then, the researcher is offered three solutions.

The first, as Lydia Goehr suggests, is that the concept of the Work is not suited to all kinds of music, and that other structures (such as Performativity) should be sought in order for their legitimisation:⁵⁴

If we are dealing with a single musical performance, say, when musicians freely improvise, how we preserve the identity of a fully composed work in a succession of performances is not an issue. Perhaps not all music is to be thought about in terms of works.

[Goehr, 2007, 31]

⁵⁰Dahlhaus is by far the most frequently cited and criticised in the existing Improvised Music literature. The German text is not italicised in Lewis' original text, and Dahlhaus' original version can be found here [Dahlhaus, 1979, 10-11].

⁵¹See [Lewis, 1996], as well as p. 55.

⁵²Still snobbism remains towards music not classifiable as a Work, and that, therefore, does not demand serious consideration (see Boulez's dismissive comments on improvisation, for example, in [Hamilton, 2007, 205]).

⁵³GEMA (*Gesellschaft für musikalische Aufführungs- und mechanische Vervielfältigungsrechte*) is Germany's administrator of performing and mechanical rights - the equivalent of PRS-MCPS in the UK, or ASCAP/BMI in the USA [GEMA, 2013]. The GEMA's structure utilises up to 80 different tariffs to differentiate between musical style and usage [Steden, 2003, 102], however these distinctions are also controversial owing to their history - the *U-* and *E-Musik* distinction originating during Nazi times (a history perhaps understandably omitted from literature such as [Kreile et al., 2005, Scholz, 2006, Gutsche, 1995, Schunke, 2008]), when it promoted and rewarded the work of 'serious' Aryan composers, while penalising and suppressing the performance of works by Jewish musicians, as well as jazz and other *negermusik* (lit. 'nigger music') [Grant, 2005, Söring, 2006].

⁵⁴Indeed, this was the origin of Performative approaches to Improvised Music.

The second is to redefine the Work concept to incorporate improvisation and musics involving it - just like Gracyk and Auslander in Popular Music studies⁵⁵ - widening the concept's definition, in this case, to encompass works without scores, with multiple/collective authorship, and where:⁵⁶

A musical work, we could now say, is a class of performances in which all the appropriate rules are followed. Whether or not the rules are formulated in the traditional manner in terms of timbre, pitch and key would now be an option for the composer. It would not be a condition for producing musical works as such.⁵⁷

[Goehr, 2007, 33]

And the third approach, returning to the use of tools from Improvisation Studies, would be to conduct an in-depth ethnographic study of Improvised Music-making in an attempt to legitimise Improvised Music on its own terms, before beginning to correlate this understanding with existing theory and extramusical models.

In order to begin to answer these questions, I suggest the following lines of enquiry:

- Can a Work exist if it is performed only once?
- If it can, does every Improvised Music performance create a Work (even if it is not written down or recorded)?
- Even if not, does Improvised Music become a Work once it's recorded (and therefore is fixed and repeatable)?

Furthermore:

- If musicians draw on pre-practiced/pre-planned materials and previous experiences, can these be classed as Works, even if their deployment is not fixed?

⁵⁵Auslander redefines the central text of popular music as the recorded version (or even the music video), stating that rock performance is "specifically organized [*sic*] around recordings" and arguing that any live show must authenticate the video of by showing the same images, movements and events live [Auslander, 2008, 77, 95, 105-6]. Gracyk similarly argues for the primary object of rock music as the recording, arguing that performers are recreating the recording in performance, as well as allowing the recording to set the standard [Gracyk, 1996, 84, 77].

⁵⁶Goehr outlines four definitions of the the Work in addition to Dahlhaus' (whose voice somewhat skews the discourse surrounding Improvised Music). One such example is a "Platonic" stance (after Nicholas Wolterstorff) which defines Musical Works as, "universals... constituted by structures of sounds... [which] lack spatio- temporal properties and exist everlastingly. They exist long before any compositional activity has taken place and long after they perhaps have been forgotten. [...] Composers, in discovering such structures, make works, [and] make these structures their works by determining for the works conditions for their correct performance". Similarly, a "Modified Platonic" stance (after Jerrold Levinson) defines Musical Works as, "structural types or kinds and their tokens are individual concrete performances, associated with a sound structure and "performing-means structure" (the instrumentation)... [identified] by its creation at a particular time, by a particular composer, in a specific historical context" [Goehr, 2007, 14-15]. Note that neither of these definitions necessitate that the music is written down, or that a score is produced.

⁵⁷Here, Goehr is referring to the rule- and strategy-based works of Cage, Henze and Stockhausen, which, like Improvised Music, generate sonically variable results from performance to performance. It occurs to me that, if there are any underlying structures (psychological or social) that underlie Improvised Music practice, then perhaps they could be analysed in a similar way.

- Similarly, if there are underlying conventions or social/psychological texts for Improvised Music-making, is it possible to define these as Works, and analyse them accordingly?

And, as regards recording:

- Do musicians seek different qualities in their recorded work to their live work?
- Do they have a preference for one or the other?
- What is the point in recording Improvised Music at all, and fixing something that was (perhaps) never meant to be captured or reproduced?

3.4 Conclusions and The Need for this Study

In Chapters 2 and 3, I have shown the need for an in-depth study of today's European Improvised Music - bringing the literature up-to-date, including younger musicians, attempting to resolve disputes between contradictory discourses (and theory and practice), as well as testing the foundations of the existing Improvised Music literature.

Such research should look to:

- Identify clear distinctions between differing Improvised Music practices, in terms of aesthetics and processes.
- Substantiate existing discourses of expressivity, authenticity, skill, performance and 'having a voice' from a contemporary perspective.
- Examine the relationship between individual agency and the group in Improvised Music-making.
- Question whether any extramusical structures or conventions underly these interactions.
- Investigate the importance of political and social models.
- Question the role and definition of freedom, surprise and mistake-making in Improvised Music.
- Look to musicians' own descriptions of their activities to identify how much material is generated 'in the moment', and how much is pre-meditated (or prepared though practice).
- Identify how Improvised Music is intended to be listened to.
- Question the idea of recording Improvised Music and, through this, the role of repeatability.
- Compare a grounded theory based on musician's own observations and ideologies to existing political and social models, as well as concepts of Musical Works, and definitions of improvisation suggested by Performativity studies.

Chapter 4

Methodology

In Chapters 2 and 3, I identified a range of themes and questions for exploration in this thesis - calling for enquiries into practice (performance, what musicians are doing when they improvise, preparation and learning), ideology (aesthetic, political and social) and practicality (legitimisation, listening and recording). This chapter outlines the methods I used to conduct the following research, as well as the choices made in selecting these approaches, and their ethical implications.

Due to the need to unite theory and practice, as well as to assess Improvised Music from a contemporary point of view and on its own terms, I have combined qualitative and quantitative methods from Social Network Analysis (SNA), Grounded Theory and Ethnography into an interdisciplinary study that seeks to step back from the field, and see the scene and its activities from an ‘emic’ point of view. This enables me to construct the theories that constitute the remainder of this thesis, and which are generated using findings grounded in my first-hand experience of the field itself.

I set out to answer these questions within the bounds of the Berlin Improvised Music scene - itself an international microcosm of differing tastes and practices, and, at the time of this research, for many musicians and listeners, the European capital of Improvised Music.¹

(Non-)auto-ethnography

Contrary to the many individual treatises cited in Chapter 3, and for those who know my parallel activities as a performer, in no way does this thesis set out to be *Improvised Music According to Tom Arthurs*, *How to Improvise Like Tom Arthurs*, or any kind of text relating to my own music-making, personal history or lifestyle choices.

Instead, this study sets out to present the diversity of opinions and stances that

¹See Chapter 5.

I discovered during fieldwork (insofar as possible making no value judgements or prioritising one line of thought over another), and draws homogenous conclusions only where there were such conclusions to be drawn. It aims not to be an exhaustive theory of improvisation or Improvised Music (if indeed that might be possible at all), but aspires to present observations that will lay foundations for future research into Improvised Music and (hopefully) stimulate discussion, both in Berlin and beyond.

The problem of being a researcher actively involved in the field of research is, of course, by no means a new one, and while my opinions and preferences will always be represented to some extent, by the distinctions I made while coding and collecting materials, in choosing which themes and materials were represented in the final version of this text, and in the reading of that very text, I took several precautions to ensure that my own biases and preferences, so far as possible, were not overly influential.²

The most important of these considerations (in addition to the use of approaches from Ethnography and Grounded Theory) was the decision to use techniques from Social Network Analysis (SNA) to choose my interviewees and fieldwork sites. And background reading, such as [Bourdieu, 1984, Bourdieu, 1993, Becker, 2008, Bennett and Peterson, 2004] was also essential in establishing a distance from the field itself, and in providing an underlaying framework for understanding music scenes, fields, artworlds, tastes and distinctions from a sociological point of view.³

Quantitative Methods: Social Network Analysis

Social Network Analysis has recently come to prominence in the Social Sciences as a means of analysing social networks in terms of the relationships that connect social actors, and the social capital and power that such actors hold. This enables the researcher to assess how information, opportunities and knowledge might flow within any given community, and also to establish which actors are key in creating those relationships.

SNA has been used in fields as diverse as sociolinguistics, biology and political science, however, in the case of music, while it has been applied to mainstream jazz, punk and Tropicália [Crossley, 2008, Gleiser and Danon, 2003, Kirschbaum and Carvalho de Vasconcelos, 2007], nothing from this perspective, to date, has been attempted in terms of an Improvised Music scene - a further omission that this thesis seeks to address.

²Impartiality is, of course, an impossibility in any absolute sense - as Bourdieu says, this is the problem belonging to those who, “wear the spectacles of culture and who do not see that which enables them to see... any more than they see what they would not see if they were deprived of what enables them to see.” [Bourdieu, 1993, 217]. This theme is also addressed, from an anthropologist’s point of view, by Narayan [Narayan, 1993].

³These texts were also inspirational in forcing consideration of the very nature of relationships between audience, critics, promoters and musicians, and raising issues relating to success, professionalism, communication and legitimisation of both known, and lesser-known, musics.

[Borgatti et al., 2013, Kadushin, 2012, Carrington et al., 2005, Scott, 2013] were consulted on the background and usage of SNA, and, in addition to helping eliminate bias in choosing participants and fieldwork sites (see below), techniques from SNA were used to identify:

- The most active musicians and venues, in terms of the accumulation of social capital (those with the most social connections and who collaborated the most widely).⁴
- The size and structure of the scene.
- Distributions of musical background, nationality, gender and age.
- How, and to what extent, the scene was connected.
- Potential cliques of taste and practice, relative to musical backgrounds, nationality, gender and age.

While SNA can also be used to trace changes in a scene over time, it was used here to present a cross-section of the scene in the calendar year 2012, and I used concert listings mined from the archive of the *echtzeitmusik.de* website [echtzeitmusik, 2013] as source material.⁵

Three database files were created in IBM SPSS Statistics - the first, taking each set (of a concert) as a case; the second, containing individual musicians (with their biographical information); and the third, listing each venue. The first file referenced the second and third files by row number. Basic statistics were mined from SPSS, and the original data was exported to UCINET [Borgatti et al., 2002] to create 1-mode (musician-musician) and 2-mode (musician-venue) networks. The musicians' biographical data (imported as attributes) was then applied to these networks.

In each case, degree centrality measures were calculated,⁶ as well as homophily and ego network constitution data for attributes such as gender and age. Ties were weighted to reflect musicians who performed together on more than one occasion.

A full methodology and description of quantitative data collection is given in Appendix A, and the outcomes of this research are presented in Chapter 5.

⁴Not necessarily the same as who played the most concerts.

⁵Considerable thanks is due to guitarist, concert organiser and *echtzeitmusik.de* maintainer, Arthur Rother, who allowed me to access to the website's archive and analytics information.

⁶Degree centrality is calculated by finding the sum of vertices (connections) incident on each node (connecting to each participant). Simply put, the number of other participants that any given performer engaged with in the year 2012. While other methods of calculating centrality exist (eigenvector, Bonacich power, etc.), I selected degree centrality in order to give the clearest and most simplistic depiction of the network.

Qualitative Approaches 1: Interviews

Following SNA, 33 individuals were interviewed, including 4 ‘expert listeners’ (one also a performer), 1 absolutely non-expert listener who knew little-to-nothing of the scene, the administrator of the Echtzeitmusik.de website (also a performer), and 28 musicians of varying age, background, career-stage and degrees of involvement in Improvised Music-making.

[Bernard, 2013, Creswell, 2013, Denzin and Lincoln, 2011, Flick, 2007, Silverman, 2013, Bryant and Charmaz, 2010, Kvale, 2007], as well as [Nettl, 1964, Merriam, 1964] were consulted as regards Grounded Theory, interview techniques and participant observation, and ethnographies such as [Born, 1995, Cohen, 1991, Meintjes, 2003, Berliner, 1994, Frith, 1978, Finnegan, 2007, Laing, 1985] proved invaluable, both structurally, and in dealing with other lesser understood or ‘difficult’ musics (punk and electroacoustic contemporary classical music, for example).

Four scoping interviews were conducted in late November/early December 2012, and the remaining interviews took place between January and August 2013. Ratios of male-to-female and German-to-international participants were chosen to reflect the structure of the scene (based on the quantitative results described above).

Initial interviewees were chosen from those with the highest SNA centrality measures (those with the most social capital or connections) and from those, based on participant observation and some personal knowledge, a purposely extreme sample was chosen.⁷ As research evolved, musicians who were repeatedly referred to by other participants, but who would not have been included only using approaches from SNA, were also included (snowballing).

Some unapologetic omissions to this method (adopted to profile the local, and not international scene) included:

- Musicians well-known in the international Improvised Music scene, living in Berlin, but not particularly active in local venues during this period. Saxophonists Frank Gratkowski and Matthias Schubert, pianists Achim Kaufmann and Magda Mayas, percussionist/drummers Tony Buck and Michael Vorfeld, and electronic musician Richard Barrett are all obvious examples.
- The first generation of improvisers from Chapter 2, who lived in Berlin. Although many of these musicians interacted with the younger generation (Sven-Åke Johansson, Alexander von Schlippenbach), I felt there was already much existing literature on such musicians (see Chapter 2) and, in any case, each of these musicians would merit a volume or thesis in themselves.
- Musicians from the Echtzeitmusik scene previously central to the development of Berlin Reductionism and its social network, but whose current activities are

⁷As Flick writes, “the field is disclosed from its extremities to arrive at an understanding of the field as a whole” [Flick, 2007].

no longer centred around Improvised Music. Tubist Robin Hayward, guitarist Annette Krebs and clarinettist Kai Fagashinski are good examples.⁸

- Musicians primarily playing solo sets in noise/industrial/drone areas of the scene (Madame Claude, Loophole, etc.). This study is primarily concerned with collective music-making, so preference was given to those musicians who mainly performed in group settings.
- Non-resident musicians visiting Berlin for a month, or just a few days.⁹

Instead, this thesis focusses on musicians living in Berlin for 3 years or more, appearing in the Berlin venues listed in Chapter 5 and Appendix F, in mid-career (generally aged 25-50) and well-established (well-known by other musicians, and regularly performing and releasing recordings). I attended at least two concerts of each performer prior to interview, as well as listening to current and past recordings, and referencing their existing publications, where relevant.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted at locations decided by the participants, generally either at home (mine or theirs), but also in cafés, parks and the beer-garden in the now-disused Tempelhof airport. Interviews lasted between one-and-a-half and three hours (one or two taking part in two sittings), and were recorded to 320kbps mp3 files, using a Zoom H4n portable digital recorder. Transcription took place during the following days (usually before the next interview took place), and where interviews were conducted in German, or German and English, this was translated during transcription, with annotations where the original German was important for the precise meaning. Missing questions and points requiring clarification were followed up by email, with variable rates of return.

Participants were offered the option to read and edit their transcriptions, and were given a reasonable deadline in order to improve accuracy clarity and language (where English wasn't the first language, or when I had translated). Subsequent meetings with a few participants were made to make minor alterations and clarifications, and to create an 'agreed' version, where this wasn't possible using the first transcription.

Participants were offered the option of anonymity, both in the interview as a whole and relating to specific topics as interviews progressed, and this has been respected in the following chapters. Any comments that could potentially cause harm to friendships and professional relationships have been anonymised, as have all criticisms relating to institutions (funders, GEMA and venues).

Fieldwork was concluded when the range of answers satisfied the questions asked, and transcriptions were coded using NVivo 10 - into the themes arising in Chapters 2 and 3, and those emerging during research. These quotes were then more concretely coded and filtered to provide the content used for analysis, and the remainder of this thesis.

⁸See p. 49.

⁹Although some passing comments from such musicians were recorded during participant observation.

Qualitative Methods 2: Participant Observation

In addition to SNA and interviews, I attended 66 concerts between November 2012 and August 2013. Concerts were chosen on the basis of the musicians playing (according to SNA and references arising during fieldwork) and according to the social importance of the venues (those with SNA high centrality scores).¹⁰

Line-ups, aesthetic characteristics, impressions of musical interactions, and descriptions of certain moments (social and musical) were recorded, as well as starting times, entrance prices, background music and audience constitution (size, gender and age). Concert attendance served to contextualise what I was learning in interviews, as well as to provide practical examples that could be used for discussion, and I noted which musicians were at each other's shows, and kept a record of informal conversations with musicians and audience members - interactions which were intended to establish their level of knowledge, listening tastes, occupation, how they had found out about the concert, and what they thought of the concert itself. Fieldnotes were written directly after each concert, and all such conversations (with audience members and musicians) are presented anonymously here.

Again my status as a 'non-participating participant' had special implications for my role as observer, and while this may have meant that some details obvious to the more naïve anthropologist may have been overlooked, my participation in the scene did make it easier to identify musicians, to carry out informed conversations and to secure interviews. One risk of this was that participants may have adjusted their responses during interviews to fit what they knew of my own musical tastes and ideology, as well as to preserve their identity within the scene, however when I felt this may have been the case I was careful to reiterate the question (or to question the answer I was receiving), while also taking care not to impress (or even mention) my own opinions when I felt this could be influential. Overall, however, and an advantage of working within a scene of strong personalities, most participants appeared happy to disagree with me when necessary, to actively interrogate my own motivations and beliefs, and to confidently assert their own points of view without any major difficulties.

I also collected flyers and programmes, and noted crossovers in the distribution of such advertising materials.

¹⁰More socially important venues such as Sowieso and Ausland were prioritised, but smaller and 'less-important' venues, as well as large venues with one-off festivals or performances (such as Radialsystem V and Marie Antoinette) were also attended, in order to encompass the full diversity of the scene. See p. 80 for the literature I consulted on participant observation.

Part II

Chapter 5

An Improvised Music Scene

Before turning to questions of making music, listening and recording, this chapter (along with Chapters 6 and 7) serves as an introduction and background to contemporary Improvised Music-making in Berlin during 2012 and 2013, presenting a picture of a small but closely-knit, international and ever-changing scene that encompassed those of all ages, existed almost entirely outside of the mainstream, and sustained itself on low budgets and a considerable amount of goodwill.

Using quantitative findings (from SPSS Statistics and Social Network Analysis), interviews and observations from the concerts I visited, I will show the size, structure and constitution of the scene, focussing, firstly, on performers and, secondly, on venues (this section will also suggest some stylistic and social boundaries for the scene itself). A third section will discuss the audience for Improvised Music (its size and constitution), and a fourth will provide an introduction to the economics of the scene, identifying the problems this posed for Berlin's improvisers, as well as listing many of the practical solutions that musicians developed in order to deal with this reality.

5.1 Performers: Facts and Figures

Age, Gender and Origin

According to the archives of the website www.echtzeitmusik.de, 1274 performers participated in 969 events including Improvised Music during the calendar year 2012.¹

Of these performers, 1078 were musicians, alongside 13 DJs, 63 dancers, 46 visual artists,

¹This meant an average of 2-3 concerts each day (although sometimes there were up to 9 or 10). Alphabetical lists of all bands, venues and performers can be found in Appendices E, F and G.

11 performance artists, 3 Poets and 1 chef.² The nature of participation was unclear (or unknown) for 59 performers, and Figure 5.1 shows the distribution of primary instruments and activities.³

Accordian	4	Guitar	96	‘Sound’	1
Bass	105	Harmonica	1	Toy Piano	1
Bass Clarinet	10	Harp	2	Trombone	23
Bassoon	1	Melodica	1	Trumpet	29
Cello	31	‘Objects’/‘Toys’	5	Tuba	4
Chef	1	Organ	6	Turntables	2
Clarinet	18	Percussion	29	Unknown	59
Dance	63	Perf. Artist	11	Vibraphone	7
DJ	13	Piano	83	Viola	10
Drums	115	Poet	3	Violin	32
Electronics	259	Recorder	3	Visuals	46
Flute	13	Saxophone	129	Voice	55
French Horn	1	Sitar	1	Zither	1

Figure 5.1: Main instrument/activitiy

Ages ranged from 18 to 82 (with a mean age of 41), and the distribution of all ages is shown in Figure 5.2. Perhaps unlike in other genres, it was common for musicians of all ages to collaborate, and 29-year-old Australian bassist Mike Majkowski regularly performed with musicians aged between 22 and 74, having the widest range in this respect.

The scene was 77% male, rising to 80-85% for those with interests in jazz, noise/drone/industrial and pop/rock/world musics. A higher proportion of those interested in dance and visual art (37% and 32%) were female, and, on average, women were more likely to have a greater number of women in their social networks (33%) than men (18%).

One club’s social network was as high as 93% male,⁴ however many female participants described how, even with such a skewed demographic, it was still easier to be accepted as a woman in the Improvised Music world than in the jazz scene. Many women I interviewed were critical of men who performed only with men (especially in more jazz-related areas), but this was often met with the retort that this was not out of sexism or discrimination, but that, as one drummer put it “if there was a woman who could play like [*named a male colleague*] then I would play with her”.

On the other hand, there were also examples of positive discrimination (especially from the Echtzeitmusik-scene and non-jazz-related areas), with the promoters of Labor Sonor

²From two evenings at Ausland called *KlangKüche* (lit. ‘SoundKitchen’), where chef Il Marchese Gaetano Ciurcina cooked *Neumanndorle e menta con crostino di caponata e Fettunta* (for Andrea Neumann) and *Biscotto al carrubo Voutchkova* (for Biliana Voutchkova), among other musician-themed dishes.

³Many played two or more instruments.

⁴This club was based around musicians with interests in jazz-related musics.

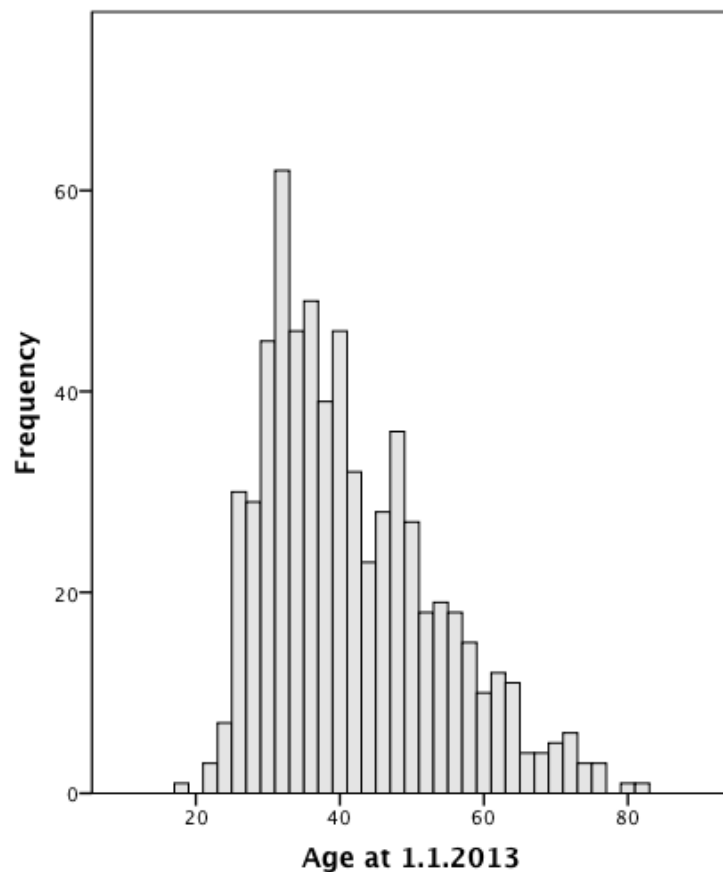


Figure 5.2: Participants' age

aiming to curate male and female performers equally,⁵ and the *Quota;Unquota* concert series at the Lichtblick Kino, which promoted only female musicians. Despite the fact that the first generation of improvisers in Chapter 2 was almost exclusively male,⁶ it was felt by contemporary musicians that the field was now open to all (although occasional sexist judgements and discrimination still occurred).⁷

27% of all participants were German, 73% were international; however, just less than half of all participants were resident in Berlin - a testament to the importance of the city as a worldwide social hub for Improvised Music.⁸ So far as was clear from the

⁵One interviewee admitted that, despite this policy, they still sometimes found it difficult to find enough female performers.

⁶Pianist Irène Schweizer and vocalist Maggie Nichols are perhaps the most notable exceptions.

⁷Andrea Neumann recalled being on tour in America, where a local sound engineer attempted to 'help' her to remove noises from her mixing desk which were actually part of the music, something she suspected would not have happened had she been a man. Vibraphone player Els Vandeweyer also spoke of the difficulty of starting a group with three male first-generation improvisers, who were initially sceptical at playing with a young female performer. See [Oliveros, 2004] for more on international contemporary women improvisers.

⁸Over the course of the year it was possible to see most of the 'big' international names of Improvised Music, such as Peter Brötzmann and Paul Lovens, Americans Peter Evans, Ken Vandermark and Anthony Braxton, the English saxophonist Evan Parker, and Dutch drummer Han Bennink. Many visiting musicians would use the opportunity of a well-paid concert (in a festival or at the Exploratorium)

available biographical information, only 13 musicians were born in Berlin.

Figure 5.3 shows the year that those resident in Berlin moved to the city, confirming a marked increase in migration, and the size of the Improvised Music community as a whole, since 1990. Figure 5.4 shows the age at which participants moved to Berlin (mainly in their 20s and early 30s), and Figure 5.5 makes clear that international migration to Berlin took place mainly after the year 2000. Of residents, 43% were German, and 25% were women (slightly higher than the average for the entire scene).

Figure 5.6 shows the ten most popular origins of Berlin-resident musicians, and this distribution accounted for over three-quarters of Berlin-based participants.

This confirmed a picture of an almost-entirely white and ‘first-world’ community,⁹ and, along with findings from interviews, this suggested a scene with relatively middle/professional class, and perhaps surprisingly conventional, roots.

Paternal occupations included engineers, construction engineers, teachers (of music and not), workers in housing and urban development, professors (of subjects including chemistry and animal behaviour), an economist, an export salesman for steel, a prominent Hamburg ship-broker and a travelling shoe salesman.

Maternal professions included many housewives (especially among older musicians), a scientist, an architect who lectured in museology/museography, a patent searcher, teachers, architects, translators and booksellers. And exceptions to these more conventional backgrounds included an opera-singing mother, the sons of a “professional” Italian communist and his scientist wife, rock’n’roll musicians (both parents) and the daughter of farmers.

to stay in Berlin for a number of days, and perform door-money gigs at smaller venues with new acquaintances, younger musicians, and old friends alike.

⁹Just as with gender, this was remarked on as strange in a scene supposedly open to all, however this was also a reflection of contemporary Berlin (and Germany as a whole), which, having only limited colonial history, has nothing like the cultural diversity of London or Paris. At the end of 2013, of Berlin’s 3.52 million official residents, 85% were ethnic German, 6% were from the European Union, and 5% originated in the rest of Europe, with the remaining 4% accounting for all other nations (14% of these were North American). [Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg, 2014].

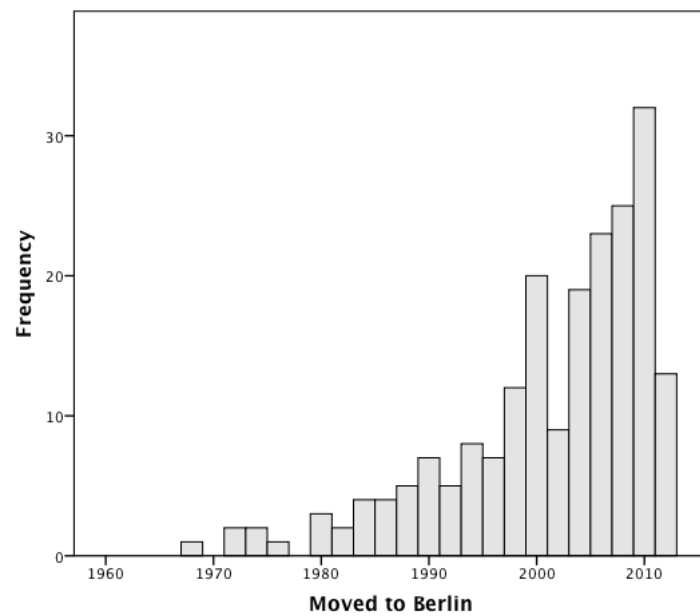


Figure 5.3: Date moved to Berlin

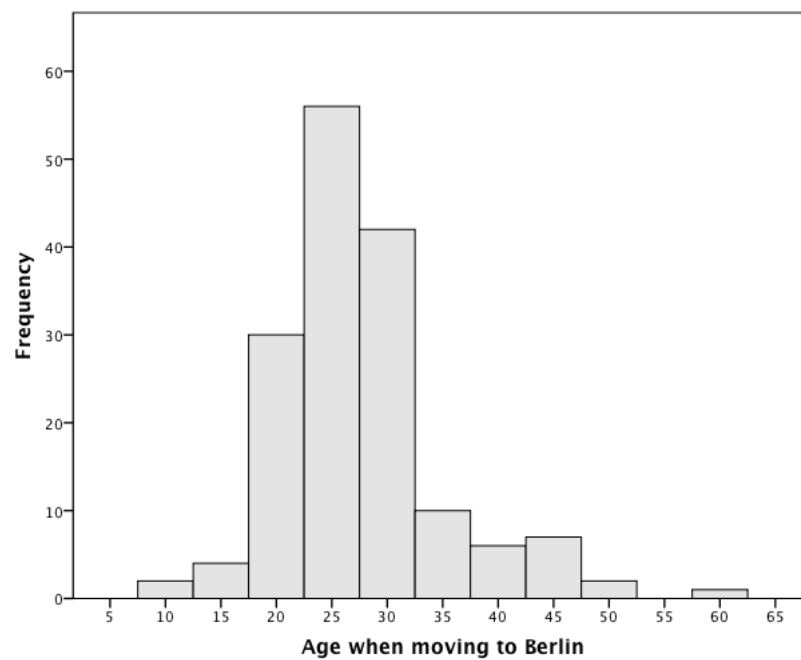


Figure 5.4: Age moved to Berlin

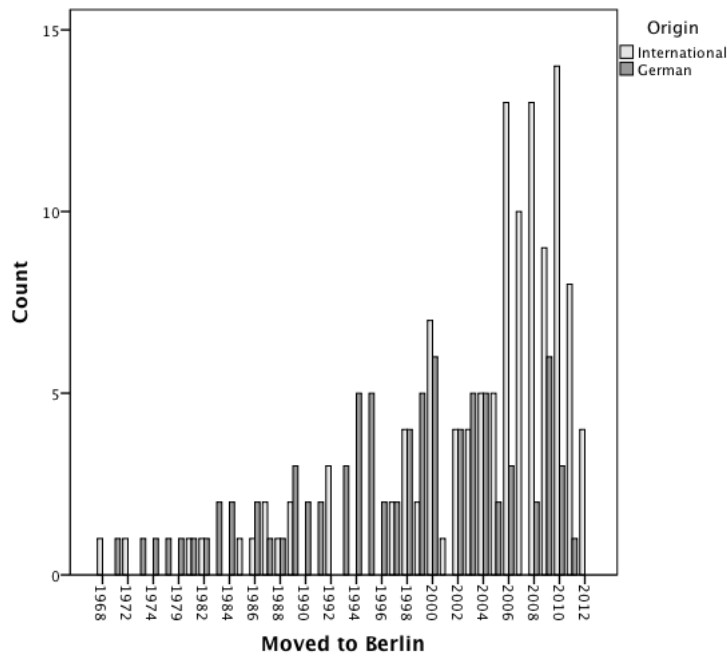


Figure 5.5: International migration to Berlin

Germany	249
Italy	38
USA	37
Japan	27
UK	18
Australia	17
Austria	14
Switzerland	13
France	12
Sweden	10

Figure 5.6: Ten most common origins of Berlin improvisers

Structure

When analysed using the tools of Social Network Analysis (SNA), the scene showed a clear core and periphery structure, as demonstrated by the 1-mode performer-performer network shown in Figures 5.7 and 5.8.¹⁰

When connected in a 2-mode network (venues and performers),¹¹ only two venues and 5 performers remained unconnected. This, and the 1-mode network above, suggests a closely-knit core scene, and this view is compounded by the inversely proportional relationship between network density and group size shown in Figure 5.9. This diagram suggests a core community of between 100 and 200 performers,¹² and the network (as a

¹⁰When expanded, the periphery is unconnected, consisting mainly of solo performances, visiting groups or other performers unconnected with the core of the scene. See Figure B.1 (Appendix B).

¹¹See Figure B.2 (Appendix B).

¹²Networks were created using the 5, 10, 20 (and so on) participants with the highest degree centrality

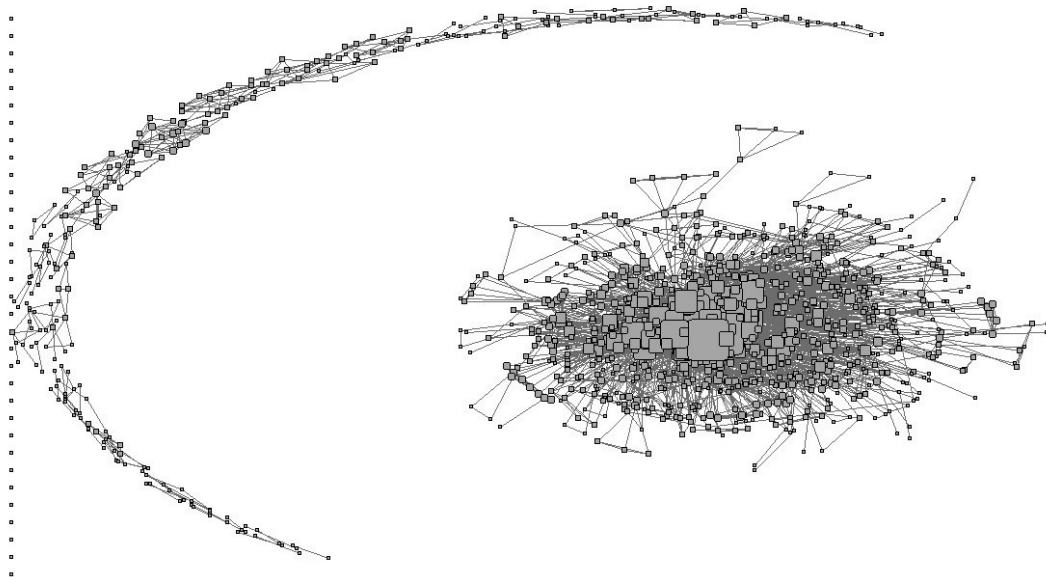


Figure 5.7: Entire social network of Improvised Music in Berlin, node size set by degree centrality. Image produced using UCINET [Borgatti et al., 2002].

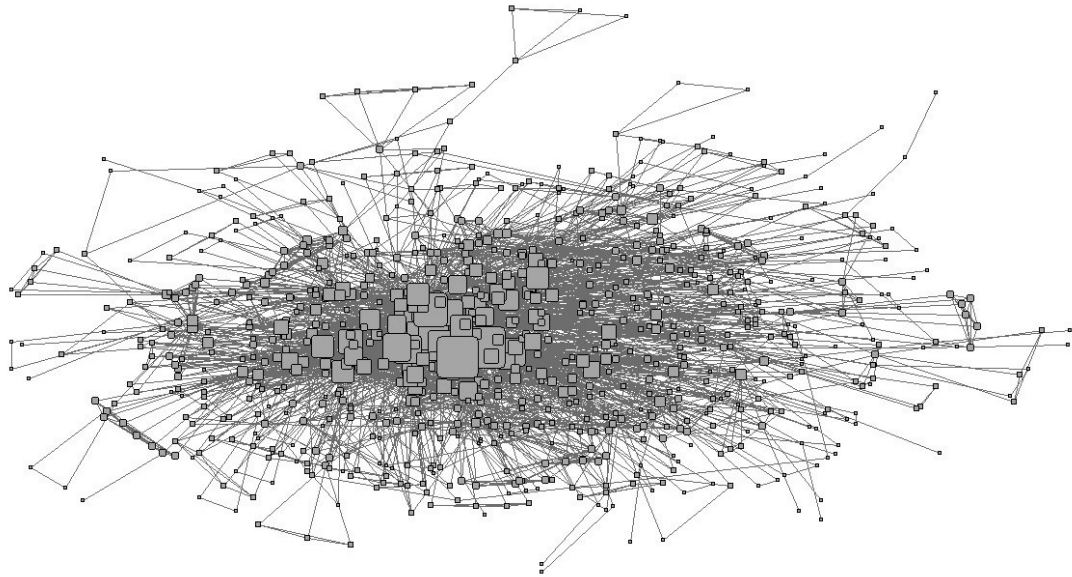


Figure 5.8: Entire social network of Improvised Music in Berlin, main component only, node size set by degree centrality. Image produced using UCINET [Borgatti et al., 2002].

whole) shows that musicians would play together in many different combinations (rather than having loyalties to just one or two projects as, perhaps, in the case of rock and pop music). Musicians also often played in constellations that performed several times over the course of a year (in addition to one-off events).

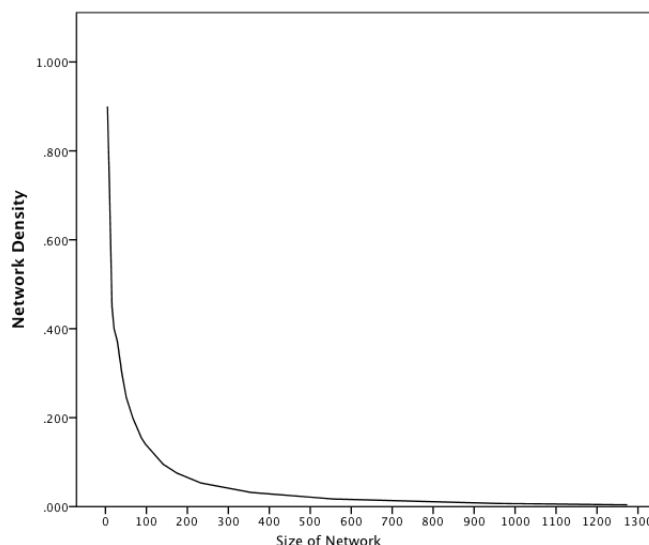


Figure 5.9: Size of social network based on degree centrality scores, related to network density

My initial hope was that SNA would clearly identify various sub-scenes and communities (using techniques such as cliques and K-cores), however, the scene turned out to be much more complex, with many musicians moving between styles (and venues) in very different and often quite personal ways.¹³

The only relationships clearly visible from SNA were a concentrated scene of those with interests in jazz and Free Jazz (as opposed to those using electronics), and a clique of German musicians with interests in jazz and Free Jazz.¹⁴ As might be expected, musicians who organised events and/or record labels were generally more central to the social network, whereas those with interests in Neue Musik,¹⁵ theatre, visual art and dance (as well as distributions of age and origin) remained more scattered,

measures. Network density was then calculated for each of these. This showed that despite an overall network density of 0.004 (only 0.4% of all possible connections had been made by performing together), with the 175 most central participants selected this rose to 7.5%, with 67 participants to 20%, with 21 to 40%, and between the top ten participants, 70% of all possible connections had been made. As Crossley points out, there are no absolute or objective criteria for what constitutes a high-density network [Crossley, 2008], however, seeing as he considers 25% for a network of 40 people (in the case of 1970s UK punk) to be high-density, in the case of Berlin's core Improvised Music community, this figure was already somewhat higher.

¹³See Chapter 6.

¹⁴See Figures B.3, B.4 and B.5 (Appendix B).

¹⁵I use the term Neue Musik to define what otherwise might be called contemporary (composed) classical music or New Music. This was the term that most participants used to refer to this area, even when speaking English or when German was not the first language.

seemingly without connection.¹⁶

Closer inspection of these diagrams¹⁷ showed that while some musicians' social networks were limited to one small area of this overall picture, many spanned several different regions, and accordingly, the romantic idea of the musician (or artist) with one line of output, conveniently grouped into social cliques of those with similar interests, clearly did not apply in the case of Berlin's Improvised Music scene.

¹⁶The diagram for Neue Musik is given as an example - see Figure B.6 (Appendix B).

¹⁷As well as the use of UCINET's Ego Network function.

5.2 Venues

In the calendar year 2012, Improvised Music performances in Berlin took place in 155 venues, including independent art galleries, former squatted houses and semi-legal bars (transformed from butchers' shops and brothels); private houses, salons and rehearsal spaces; as well as mainstream jazz clubs, churches, interdisciplinary performance spaces,¹⁸ the *Institut Français* and even Berlin's central station. An alphabetical list of all venues can be found in Appendix F.

The geographical distribution of these venues is shown in Figure 5.10, and this map shows clusters in the districts of Prenzlauer Berg and Mitte (the now-gentrified sites of 1990s post-GDR squatting),¹⁹ as well as in Kreuzberg 10999 and Neukölln (a significant site of gentrification since 2008 or thereabouts).²⁰

The ten most socially important venues emerging from SNA (defined by degree centrality and listed in descending order) were Sowieso, Ausland, Naherholung Sternchen, Jazzkeller 69 in Aufsturz, Madame Claude, Quiet Cue, Lichtblick Kino, a private salon formerly located in Mitte but that moved to the up-and-coming district of Wedding in 2013,²¹ The Great Heisenberg and Wendel, and these venues fell mostly into two camps - 'ad-hoc'/DIY-style bars, and neutral, studio-like performance spaces/theatres.²²

Bars and performance spaces were relatively informal settings; many were, perhaps, not entirely legal;²³ and audiences and performers often mingled with one another, many

¹⁸Such as Radialsystem V (home to choreographer Sasha Waltz).

¹⁹See p. 47.

²⁰The district of Kreuzberg is divided into two areas - postcode 10999, around Kotbusser Tor (with a large Turkish population), and the more-expensive and more-gentrified Bergmannkiez, postcode 10961. During my fieldwork, Neukölln was in a constant state of flux, with cafés, bars and waffle houses slowly replacing smoky corner darts pubs such as *Aller-Eck* (on the corner of Aller Strasse), *Alptraum 3* ('Nightmare 2') and *Bierbaum 3* ('Beer Tree 3'). Boddinstrasse and Leinestrasse U-Bahn stations (home to Sowieso, The Great Heisenberg and Quiet Cue) were being entirely renovated over those months, and I often saw notices in ground floor residential windows urging incoming tenants not to pay more than a certain level of rent, so as not to inflate the prices for local people (see the campaign [nk44, 2014], for example).

²¹Closed for the period in between, the salon were asked to leave their previous location for undisclosed reasons, the landlord apparently not even open to discussion. Those running the salon asked that the place remained anonymous, "[Our] policy has always been 'we don't exist', it's better that was I think... if people read it that know [us] then they will know, and if people don't know, they don't know. And if they're curious they will find it."

²²Sowieso means 'anyway' or 'anyhow', Ausland 'foreign country' (but with the political implication of being an exception not belonging to Berlin, Germany, or perhaps anywhere), Naherholung Sternchen 'starlet local recreation spot', Jazzkeller 'jazz cellar', and Lichtblick Kino either 'ray of hope cinema' or 'bright spot cinema' (also in the sense of being something of an exception in the surrounding greyness). The Great Heisenberg was, presumably, named after the protagonist of the TV series *Breaking Bad*.

²³In terms of alcohol licensing and paying GEMA (music publishing rights). Typical of the attitude of many, one promoter told me that "It would actually be quite impossible for the GEMA to interfere with [our] business, because [our venue] is private. And in privacy you can do whatever you want to. And [we] will stay private, and will always be private. [...] When people say it's an illegal bar, I say "Call it that way if you want to, no problem for me", but no, it's not. It's totally legal. I'm not allowed actually to sell drinks. But officially I don't sell - it's a present, and I receive a present. It's only [that] I say how the present goes! [laughs]. So I don't think that's ever going to be a problem."

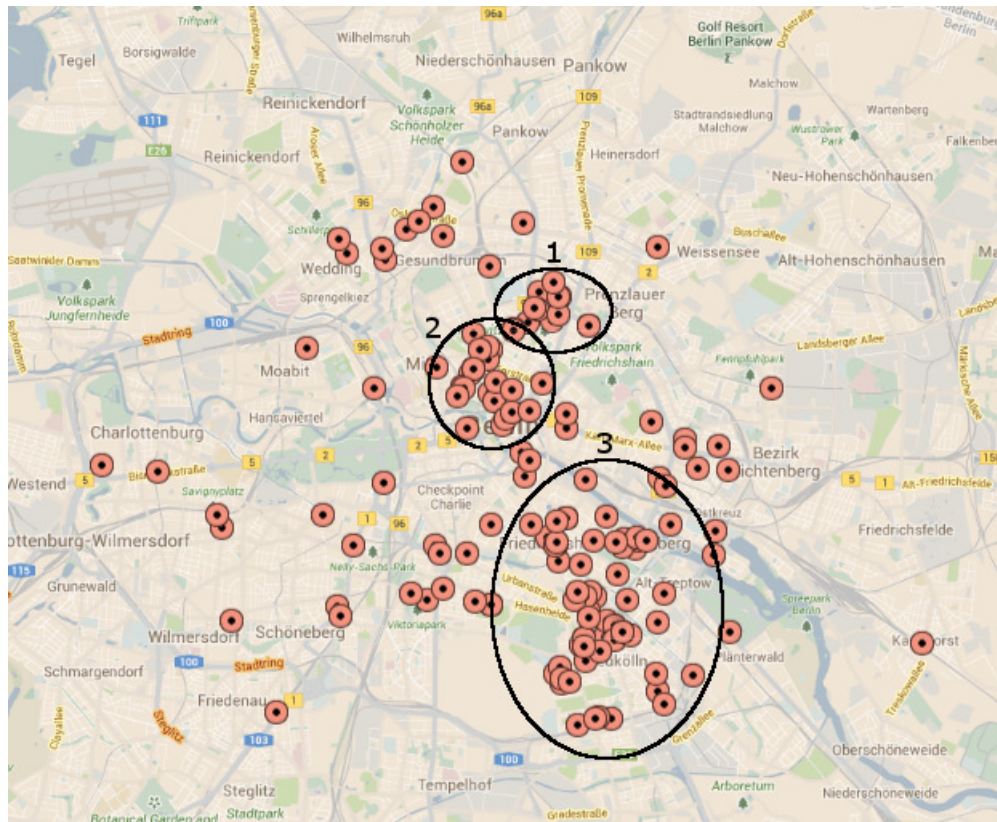


Figure 5.10: Map of Berlin Improvised Music venues in (1) Prenzlauer Berg, (2) Mitte and (3) Kreuzberg/Neukölln. 2 venues in Potsdam and Zepernick, outside the bounds of this map, have been omitted. Map data © Google 2014.

venues being too small to have dressing rooms or stages (audience and performers were on the same level).

Many were extremely hard to find, without signs or literally hidden underground (Ausland, Madame Claude and Sucked Orange Gallery); Marie Antoinette was obscured behind an office block (in railway arches near to Jannowitzbrücke station);²⁴ and NK was in the second floor of a darkened courtyard, directly above a 24-hour commercial bakery.

‘Ad-hoc’ bars were typically decorated with a selection of second-hand or self-built furniture, as well as various other second-hand, gifted or ‘found’ items and artworks. By means of example, the Sowieso menu was written in marker pen on an antique mirror hung behind the bar, faded tiles from the venue’s former days as a butchers’ shop adorned the floor and walls (in some parts overlaid with decadent gilded wallpapers), and an upturned candelabra with multicoloured bulbs hung, elegantly, from a wood-panelled ceiling.

The old salon in Mitte was similarly distinct - visitors rang an unassuming doorbell to

²⁴The offices were those of the BVG (Berlin’s public transport agency), and the entrance to Marie Antoinette was opposite where fines were paid if caught without a valid ticket on the S- or U-Bahn.

gain access to the building and, once inside, the walls of the house's main entrance were already covered by a collage of street- and cutout-art, as was the stairway that led up from a typical Berlin residential courtyard to a 35m² residential flat.²⁵ Entering the concert room was like entering a parallel universe - every conceivable inch of wall and ceiling space was adorned with texts, collages and paintings (by various artist friends of the hosts), and such artworks included a Japanese depiction of the Mexican day of the dead, a giant papier mâché washing machine with a protruding light shaped like an alien eye, a golden octopus (hung from the ceiling in its own net), and a small wooden box marked '*Theatre du Jour*' (containing three friendly, yet slightly sinister, stuffed figures). There was poetry on the ceiling, and as you entered the main room a small text, at knee level, declared "*Arbeit macht frei. Nicht arbeiten macht freier.*"²⁶ Behind the handmade bar, two men of around 40, a suited Tyrolean who spoke something of every language under the sun (also a woodworker and sometime professional waiter) and a Japanese shop and restaurant outfitter (with pony tail and whiskers), served fine wines, soup and famously large doses of single malt whiskies.

Elsewhere, black- or white-box performance spaces such as the concert room in KuLe (where the series Labor Sonor was held), Quiet Cue, Galerie Zeitzone and Ausland (actually a concrete bunker with a self-built bar overlooked by a fur-covered soundbooth accessible by metal ladder) were also used, especially for performances related to the Echtzeitmusik scene. Bassist Alexander Frangenheim's studio Boerne45, the upstairs rooms at Radialsystem V and Tanzfabrik were all fitted out like dance studios, and the Exploratorium was similarly reminiscent of this kind of environment - with wooden floors, mirrors and white walls.

This list of venues points to the continued fleetingness of the scene itself,²⁷ and while KuLe had been used for Labor Sonor since 2000 and Ausland existed since 2002, most of the other Improvised Music venues of the late-1990s had ceased to be. In Neukölln, Sowieso and Quiet Cue opened in 2008 and 2009,²⁸ but many other venues recorded by Blazanovic in 2010, including Strahlau 68, Die Remise, the Electronic Church and Raum20 (all of which opened after 2000) had fallen by the wayside by the time my fieldwork began.²⁹

Changing, but remaining in 2013, Naherholung Sternchen dramatically reduced its Improvised Music programming (presenting only festivals as opposed to single concerts) and, as mentioned above, the salon disappeared from its home in fashionable Mitte, only to reappear some months later in a former industrial building in the upcoming district

²⁵This stairway was already painted over during renovation in around 2011, a sign of gentrification to come.

²⁶"Work makes you free. Not working makes you freer", a play on the phrase used by the Nazis and often erected over the entrance to WWII Concentration camps.

²⁷See p. 47.

²⁸The first concentrated period of Improvised Music in Neukölln began around this time.

²⁹See [Blazanovic, 2011b].

of Wedding. Allegedly owing to a dispute between the owners, The Great Heisenberg, beloved by many musicians, shut suddenly in the Spring, and Neukölln's Sucked Orange Gallery was under constant threat from neighbours, the police and the owners of the house.³⁰

On the other hand, every couple of months, new venues would spring into life - the Ackerstadt Palast (a black-box theatre for 60-70 people in the courtyard behind two other clubs in Mitte) began programming Improvised Music alongside dance and performance art,³¹ and the Direktorenhaus (promoted by Assi Glöde of Jazzkeller69, alongside the Umlaut collective and Jazzkollektiv Berlin) opened for a few months, before disappearing due to low attendance.

Other Uses

As with performers themselves,³² venues showed varying degrees of commitment to Improvised Music, and their other activities also served to suggest the aesthetic and social boundaries of the scene itself - providing a sense of the wider context to which today's scene belonged.

Sowieso was the only venue entirely devoted to Improvised Music (programming every night from Tuesday til Saturday), whereas other venues varied dramatically - from those promoting one concert a year, to those with one concert per week, one per month, or those with only occasional nights and one-off festivals.

The B Flat also promoted mainstream jazz, and Aufsturz (home to Jazzkeller69) mainly programmed rock bands for the remaining six nights of the week (all of the B Flat was programmed by the same in-house promoter, whereas other programming in Aufsturz was unrelated to Assi Glöde's control of the Jazzkeller). Similarly, former brothel Madame Claude hosted the electronic Improvised Music night *Experimontag* on Mondays, but the rest of the time presented DJs, open-mic sessions and parties, as did *Naherholung Sternchen*, which described itself as "a special place for inspiration, relaxation and collective pleasure" [Naherholung Sternchen, 2014].

Naherholung was representative of the several of the musical and social networks into which Improvised Music fitted and that, I would argue, defined its boundaries,³³ hosting

³⁰See [suckedorangegalerie, 2013b]. To protect itself, there was not even a sign outside, no lights, and no sign from street-level that anything was going on within.

³¹The other clubs were the legendary *Schokoladen* rock club and the *Club der Polnischen Versagers* (literally 'Club of the Polish Losers'). This former squat, in now-gentrified Mitte, was threatened with extinction from 2011 onwards, but was able to continue thanks to the philanthropy of a Swiss foundation (Stiftung Edith Maryon), who, reportedly, had bought the whole building and offered the venues an ongoing lease at prices far below the market rate, on the condition that they continued promoting non-commercial 'free' culture [Stiftung Edith Maryon, 2012].

³²See next section, and Chapter 6.

³³Background music, played before and after performances, also offered some clues to this context - Sowieso's Marc van der Kemp often spinning classic 1950s jazz records, the *Ausland* team sometimes

festivals including Jazzkollektiv Berlin's 'Kollektiv Nights' and the Emitter Microfestival (both 3-4 nights long). And, whilst the background and focus of each of these festivals was quite different (Jazzkollektiv concerned with approaches from jazz, and Emitter with sound art), both contained examples of Improvised Music alongside other bands and composed works.³⁴

Similarly, Ausland, which in January 2013 promoted Improvised Music events alongside 'Paris/Berlin: 20 Years of Underground Techno' (film screening, plus turntable performance), 'Lyric in Ausland' (an evening of readings), a night of electroacoustic music presented by the electronic studios of the TU,³⁵ as well as 'Don't give up - you can dance!' ("A new series of dancemusic beyond style at Ausland hosted by the vulva string quartett a.k.a. hanno leichtmann [*sic*"]), described itself as:

A non-commercially run venue in Berlin for music and performance and related public and non-public events... the focus clearly is on experimental, non-mainstream, demanding, kind of weird stuff which either makes you comfortable or makes you leave the place before you've even finished your first (cheap) drink.

[Ausland, 2013]

And many venues defined themselves by a similar emphasis on the alternative, the experimental, the strange, the underground and the subversive - NK describing itself as:

An artist run independent non-profit organization [*sic*] that is dedicated to Sound Arts... taking part in the creation and support of a "culture", with a focus on experimental music, which could be defined as unusual, strange, extreme and unique music that pushes against the boundaries or definitions of what is considered musical.

[NK, 2013]

The Sucked Orange Gallery's website described how:

Inspired by the concept of hell by Refus Global de Borduas, the galerie [*sic*] was a concrete manifestation of total acceptance. In the beginning we

playing recordings of Alvin Lucier pieces, and Madame Claude's DJs playing a wide range of experimental electronic music. As Chapter 6 will show, it is also important to point out that these boundaries are extremely blurred and dotted lines at best.

³⁴Pianist Marc Schmolling, one of the founder members of Jazzkollektiv Berlin, described that, "Each of us has got a different style and taste, some of us really write more than they improvise and vice versa. But definitely, improvisers and improvisation are part of 'our world', and we also have often guests that can be related more to the 'Echtzeitmusik-scene' rather than the jazz-scene... I think we don't care which format, improvised or written, an artist uses to create and perform music." On the other hand, Emitter Micro festival's programme and advertising stated that, "Emitter Micro is a 3-day festival of sound art in Berlin... [proposing] a selection of international and Berlin-based artists from multiple contemporary sound practices and genres; be it electronic or acoustic, digital or analog, installed or performed, improvised or composed."

³⁵*Technische Universität Berlin*, Berlin's technical university.

created a parallel world with a commercial culture, an aesthetic approach diving in all kinds of forms of expression, in a revitalizing [*sic*] happening mad creation.

All lucid dreamers, spectacle with paintings, sculptures, theatre, cinema, concerts, poetry, and music (popular, Concrete, Electronic, Contemporary, Avant garde, Folk, Experimental, Noise, krautrock and Free jazz). [*sic*] [suckedorangegalerie, 2013a]

As well as hosting concerts, Quiet Cue held installations in its front room (formerly home to the experimental record store Staalplaat), and many musicians made use of Ausland, Boerne⁴⁵ and the Exploratorium to make recordings, practise and rehearse during the daytime.

5.3 Audiences

Across this network of ad-hoc bars and performance spaces, audiences typically numbered between 25 to 60 people, and, as most venues were relatively small, many were full with 55-60 and comfortably busy with 25-30.

Festivals such as Kollektiv Nights and the Emitter Microfestival, as well as Splitter Orchestra performances,³⁶ typically had audiences of up to 100, and, according to one of the organisers, the *A L'Arme* festival at Radialsystem V (once a year, and with a line-up of international 'stars' of free jazz and Improvised Music, as well as more well-known Berlin musicians) attracted crowds of around 350. From time to time there were audiences of less than 10 people, but these occurrences were relatively seldom.

Audiences were mainly comprised of one third musicians from the scene (of all ages); one third friends and family of the performers (and friends they had brought with them, usually similar in age to the performers); and one third either locals, 'regulars' or other venue-specific audiences.

Particular crowds constituting this last third included students in their mid-20s (Sowieso, The Great Heisenberg),³⁷ a particular type of mid-40s intellectual/artistic Prenzlauer Berg resident (Ausland), and the Ausland staff and other musicians from the Echtzeitmusik-community were all often to be seen at Labor Sonor nights (in KuLe).³⁸ Jazzkeller69 attracted an older audience connected with the former-East German jazz scene,³⁹ the Exloratorium's audience was often comprised of more bourgeois-looking art- and music-lovers in their 50s and above,⁴⁰ and the B Flat usually incorporated a handful of tourists - many of whom appeared to have found the club thanks to a recommendation in a popular Berlin tourist guide.⁴¹

At some venues, notably the salon and Labor Sonor, the audience's musician-quotient could be even higher, and this was sometimes perceived as somewhat exclusive to the 'regular' public - one friend (not at all a member of the scene) commenting to me, following a concert, that:

³⁶Splitter Orchester was a highly respected Post-Reductionist orchestra of 24 musicians from the Echtzeitmusik scene, who performed improvisations, conceptual works and occasional Neue Musik works (for example, the collaboration with composer Mathias Spahlinger at the *46. Internationale Ferienkurs für Neue Musik Darmstadt 2012*, one of Germany's most important Neue Musik festivals) [Splitter Orchester, 2015]. Splitter Orchestra performances were something of a rarity, occurring only once or twice a year in Berlin itself.

³⁷This part of Neukölln was a popular student area, owing to low rents.

³⁸Ausland was run by a small team of volunteers.

³⁹Promoter Assi Glöde had previously been responsible for the Parkhaus Treptow, arguably East Berlin's most important venue for Free Jazz (see footnote, p. 44).

⁴⁰The likes of whom probably would not be seen in more underground venues, such as Sowieso or Loophole.

⁴¹As with the students in Sowieso, often these visitors were no longer to be seen by the second set of a more adventurous Improvised Music concert.

I would say that 90% of them were in the Improvised Music scene themselves, and just one or two people were friends-of-friends, and then there was me!

And another listener added that, at the salon:

I took sometimes some friends who were not really into Improvised Music, and for them it was too private.

The audience was generally two-thirds male and one-third female, and often highly international - again, varying in relation to who was playing, and reflecting the ethnic diversity of the performers.⁴² Announcements (where given at all) were just as often in English as they were in German, and in some venues the first language appeared to be Spanish, French or Portuguese.

Three different circuits existed, in the sense that I would see the same people at Quiet Cue, Ausland, Labor Sonor and Burkhard Beins' nights at NK⁴³ (Echtzeitmusik-scene concerts); Sowieso, The Great Heisenberg and the salon (jazz/Free Jazz/European Improvised Music-related concerts); and Loophole, Madame Claude and NK (noise/drone/industrial/electronic concerts).⁴⁴ And few listeners crossed these apparent boundaries of taste - David Diaz, a 44-year old Spanish postdoctorate student of 19th Century German art theory, being one of very few.

Of the handful of other 'expert' listeners I met several times during fieldwork, and who themselves were out several nights of the week listening to Improvised Music, were retired architectural historian and bassist Klaus Kürvers (when he wasn't playing himself), his partner Viola (who often took photos), a woman in her early 40s who worked in the film school in Babelsberg (promoting student films) and a software engineer.

Of friends, family and other visitors, and again emphasising the predominantly middle-class/professional nature of the scene,⁴⁵ many were from the arts (visual artists, 'classical' composers, actors, theatre directors and dancers), and I also met a maker of electronic instruments, officials from Berlin's *Institut Français*, other Improvised Music PhD researchers, translators, a furniture maker, graphic designers, a doctor, a speech therapist, a professor of sociology, a man who described his profession as "harmonising rooms", a computer programmer, a theoretical physicist and an Italian farmer (who was taking a year away from his crops, while the land refreshed itself).

While most were there because of friends playing, regular fans and newcomers could discover upcoming events through the *echtzeitmusik.de* website, a monthly email-shot sent out by Klaus Kürvers, and various posters and flyers (distributed

⁴²See Figure 5.6, p. 90.

⁴³A short concert series under the name Perceptive Turns.

⁴⁴See Chapter 6 for more precise descriptions of these terms. These circuits could also be identified by the distribution of leaflets, posters and flyers through these networks (the B Flat's advertising, for example, never appeared in Loophole or in Ausland).

⁴⁵See p. 88.

from venue-to-venue). Individual websites of musicians and venues provided further information, and, at the end of 2013, the website `echtzeitmusik.de` was receiving around 400 visits every day, from approximately 1200 unique users (each month) [Webalizer, 2014].⁴⁶

⁴⁶Again, thanks is due to Arthur Rother for access to the `echtzeitmusik.de` web analytics archive.

5.4 Economies and Ways of Life

Performers at most of Berlin's Improvised Music concerts were paid either through a door-money system⁴⁷ or by *Spende* (literally 'donation'). At some venues there was no specified minimum donation (Wendel, the salon), whereas at others, prices were fixed anywhere between €5 and €8 (Labor Sonor, Quiet Cue, Ausland). As an alternative model, Sowieso, Ackerstadt Palast and Galerie Zeitzone all asked audience members to decide the level of their own entrance fee (between €5-10), as did Madame Claude and NK (€1-6 and €6-10 respectively).

As 63-year-old American cellist Tristan Honsinger put it, playing at Sowieso, "with more than 30 people a night we almost make 50 a man", and while some concert series, such as Labor Sonor, *Biegungen* (in Ausland) and Jazzkeller69 were able to offer fixed fees (usually between €75-100), the only fixed-money gigs in Berlin were occasional small festivals such as Kollektiv Nights (€100 when they didn't have funding, and €200 when they did)⁴⁸ and exceptional cases such as the Exploratorium (which offered a fee of €300 per musician to those performing in the *Improvisation International* concert series). Another considerable exception was the *A L'Arme* festival (which reputedly offered up to €1000 to each performer)⁴⁹ and, in these cases, entrance prices were usually somewhat higher and fixed - €10 (€8 concession) at the Exploratorium, and €16 (€12 concession) for each night of *A L'Arme*.

Accordingly, only a living on the lowest financial level was possible from Berlin's Improvised Music scene alone, and, to achieve even this, musicians had to be playing several nights a week in the small venues, with occasional festivals, to make ends meet. While this was how many musicians did choose to live (often hoping that this short-term sacrifice would pay off in the future), for many others this was a hard choice to make, and such musicians balanced their Improvised Music income with that from other musics, or with other jobs entirely.

Musicians' interests in other musical genres will be discussed in Chapter 6.3, however the remainder of this Chapter looks at life as a 'professional' full-time improviser, as well

⁴⁷Performers are paid directly in relation to the income from tickets or the entrance price, and their income is dependant on that price, and the size of the audience (as opposed to receiving a fixed fee).

⁴⁸Such funding, for small or mid-level venues hosting festivals or concert series, typically came from the Berliner *Senatskanzlei für Kulturelle Angelegenheiten* (Berlin's state regional office for cultural affairs), as well as local administrations such as the *Bezirksamt* (local town hall) of Pankow and Neukölln, and the *Deutsche Musikrat* and *Impuls Neue Musik* (all of which regularly awarded funding of €500 to €3000 or €4000). See Appendix C for more information on public funding of Berlin's Improvised Music scene.

⁴⁹Such larger-scale events were generally supported by awards from funding bodies such as *Hauptstadtkulturfonds* (whose applications began at €50,000), and these applications were often mediated through a small number of arts professionals with interests in Improvised Music, such as Splitter Orchestra-manager and Ausland-founder Gregor Hotz, or Melanie Rossmann of the agency *Aufklang* (who was also instrumental in writing smaller individual applications to the Senat). HKF funding was generally held to be impossible to attain on the level of the individual musician (one of the requirements being to already have partners at established large venues such as Radialsystem V).

as the other strategies and life choices made by improvising musicians in Berlin.

Looking, firstly, to those who sought to make their living exclusively from Improvised Music, and whilst it was possible to survive for some time on income just from Berlin, the aspiration and, for most, the only way to make a living from Improvised Music was to be active on the international circuit - touring clubs and playing in festivals.⁵⁰

International festival fees were usually between €400-600 (plus flights and accommodation), but occasionally were as high as €1000 or €1200 (although such highly paid concerts happened only once or twice a year for even the most ‘successful’ musicians).⁵¹ Touring was less lucrative - one saxophonist in his mid-30s, relatively well-known in the international improvised noise scene, told me that he’d promised himself, “no more squat tours of 20 gigs in 22 days, coming home with 100 Euros”, and, relating more to the jazz and Free Jazz scene, 44-year-old bassist Jan Roder⁵² added that:

In Germany, the clubs, if you have someone famous with you, like Alex [von Schlippenbach]... you get €1000 for a band... €1200 maybe. [...] Sometimes the travelling is already in there, and the hotels they pay - [but] most of the time it’s something like 600 for the entire band and you have to pay the travel on top of it... it works if you have enough gigs and the travel paid.⁵³

As I will show in Chapter 11, income from recording was also negligible (or even ran at a loss), and many older and more experienced musicians chose to boycott door-money or donation concerts entirely (claiming that as well as being financially inefficient this system devalued the scene as a whole).⁵⁴

⁵⁰ *Konfrontationen* (Nickelsdorff, Austria), *Festival Densités* (Fresnes-en-Woëvre, France) and Music Unlimited (Wels, Austria) were all popular festivals among musicians. Touring was pan-European, but there was also a considerable demand for Improvised Music in Japan and in North America (exchanges with the Chicago scene not being uncommon). It was also common for musicians moving to Berlin to arrive with enough savings for 1 or 2 years - using this time to investigate the local scene before a harder reality sometimes set in.

⁵¹ Many musicians noted that sometimes there were years with none of these concerts at all, and one, in his mid-30s, alleged that, “it’s super hard to get these gigs on the festivals, and also in this Improvised Music world there’s a mafia of people who play everywhere all the time. It’s hard for the younger generation.”

⁵² Where no nationality is specified, participants were German-born.

⁵³ Touring groups were mainly trios or quartets. Usually tours consisted of a combination of club and festival dates and, as bassist Clayton Thomas explained, a certain flexibility was necessary for making things work. For Thomas, “A good gig... is 400 [Euros] minimum... and travel and a hotel, that’s my criteria, I’m happy to go and do that. [...] 300? If there’s three in a row, fucking awesome, no question... if there’s three [at] even 200, I don’t care... if we’re playing, and we’re doing like a week, and there’s some gigs that pay 100, and there’s a gig that pays 200, and there’s one gig that pays 800 or 600 or whatever, it’s fine, great.”

⁵⁴ Many were concerned that this system implied to a wider public that Improvised Music was something ‘for free’ and therefore worth nothing (compared to other artforms). Others, however, saw local/door-money concerts as opportunities to test out new groups in front of an audience before taking them to festivals, as “paid practice” and as a space to take risks, as well as to grow their own social network (for this reason these concerts were particularly important to newcomers). For many, their willingness to play in such venues also depended on the place itself, the generosity of the hosts (receiving respect, free food and/or drinks), as well as the importance of the chance to perform an intimate concert

It was widely accepted that, even at the highest level, it was close to impossible to make more than €10-12,000 per year from Improvised Music alone,⁵⁵ and from this perspective, Berlin was the ideal place to be - old rental agreements signed before gentrification⁵⁶ making it possible to stay living on a low financial level and still devote a substantial amount of time to artistic study and development.⁵⁷

For this reason, it was common for many (especially younger) musicians to live on around €1000 each month (one musician with a young family told me he needed to bring home between €1500 and €1700), and many lived in small, shared or unrenovated flats (often still with coal ovens).⁵⁸ Even on this level, however, one highly successful musician, in his late 40s, described his financial situation as “precarious”, and one young musician (and one of the most internationally recognised of his generation) told me that:

I still can't really live from it. It's really difficult. My parents never give me money - €50 each year or something [and] I earn €10,000 a year on average. That's incredible! [*sarcastic, in disbelief*]. Or 11. A little more, when you include the *schwarzgeld*.⁵⁹ So then, what I have in the end, it's not so much - really on the edge of poverty.

And now it's on a really high level, the people I play with, and the circles I move in, but... it's nuts. [...] I don't know if it can get much better - I hope it exists, that it can get better. [...] I always have to live from concerts [and] when it doesn't go well for me financially, it doesn't go well. It's really hard. It's a real pressure.

Not all were so discontented however, and for many, the chance to have the time to practice, perform and hone their art was a fair enough exchange for living on a low income, 33-year-old saxophonist Anna Kaluza telling me that:

I don't need much money anyway - it doesn't really interest me to buy something except for food - I mean really I don't need *things* so much. [...] Luckily I have this affordable rent, Berlin is still cheap food-wise... [and] you can do many [cultural] things for free. Sometimes you can have a very

to a quiet and discerning audience.

⁵⁵By means of comparison, in 2011, the average annual income in Berlin was €30,144 for women, and €38,856 for men [Statistik Berlin-Brandenburg, 2012].

⁵⁶Rent increases in Berlin are heavily capped, and it was common for new tenants to take over an apartment directly from the previous tenant and not via an estate agent, firstly, so that the owner couldn't raise the price, but secondly, to avoid paying estate agents' commissions (which could be equivalent to 2 months rent, or more).

⁵⁷As I will show in Chapter 10 (p. 241), there were also non-musical political/ideological reasons for these choices, as well as the fear of being perceived by as “selling out” by diluting their musical output.

⁵⁸Up until the 1990s it was common for many buildings to be heated with individual coal ovens, before they were *saniert* (renovated) and central gas heating for the whole building was installed, often leading to substantial rent increases. Many had monthly rents of €250-300 and one couple in Neukölln paid as little as €130 each (all prices here are ‘warm’ - including water and heating).

⁵⁹Cash-in-hand that's not officially declared.

cosy life just playing small gigs and drinking free beer, and go home with your saxophone on your back. [...] I mean, I don't say I will be happy with this for all my life... but at the moment it's really nice.

And for 46-year-old clarinettist and bass-clarinettist Rudi Mahall, who lived with his partner in the countryside near Berlin (growing his own produce and earning his living purely as a performer of Improvised Music and jazz):

We need *nothing*, and things go so well for us! I'm always happy about that, and mostly I'm in a good mood because I think I'm really in the right place at the right time. There's no war, I don't have to work, I can just indulge myself in my extremely egoistical vocation, and also just feel great! It's amazing!

For many, though, the prospect of such a precarious financial existence was simply too difficult, and many musicians supplemented (or had previously supplemented) their Improvised Music incomes with jobs including copywriting, babysitting, translating Windows software, mastering and mixing recordings, taxi driving, assisting a well-known visual artist, and working in record stores, bookshops, cafés and street markets. The most common non-performing profession was music teaching (generally part-time) and, although this was rarely teaching Improvised Music, such work was considered the most efficient way to earn enough so that, as one young cellist told me, she was “free” just to play the music she wanted to play.⁶⁰

Others, however, chose to earn their living entirely independently of their Improvised Music-making: one trumpeter, for example, wrote music for one of Berlin's most famous theatre companies (although, with a young family to support, he commented that he would give this up immediately, if it were possible to earn enough through Improvised Music and his other musical passions) and guitarist, Labor Sonor-promoter and echtzeitmusik.de website-maintainer, Arthur Rother, ran an IT solutions company and performed just 5-6 concerts each year.⁶¹ Exceptionally, some musicians were in the position to have had apartments bought outright by their parents, and were able to live comfortably whilst earning relatively little.⁶²

The division between musicians that might be termed ‘professional’/full-time improvisers and those who engaged in the scene on a more part-time basis was not one that emerged

⁶⁰Only the most internationally renowned musicians gave occasional workshops and private lessons in Improvised Music practice, and younger musicians pointed out several times that their older mentors often refused to ‘teach’ formally - choosing not to accept money, but to have a ‘jam’ session or play a low-profile concert, so that younger musicians could learn by ‘doing’ (see Chapter 7). Regular sessions at Klaus Kürvers’ house also united musicians of all ages and levels of experience.

⁶¹These concerts were mostly with the group ‘SINK’.

⁶²Some such musicians were met with considerable hostility from others, one musician commenting, of another, that, “[You] own your apartment because your parents gave it to you... [and] you don't have to make any money, so you can... fucking judge everyone, and make a sine wave for an hour and call it art”.

in choices of group constellation (musicians with all levels of engagement played with one another and this distinction did not reflect any differences in levels of proficiency). However, this did have important implications for those pursuing a better situation for Berlin's improvisers, with a clear distinction emerging between musicians aiming to make their income (or a significant part of their income) from Improvised Music-making, and those for whom the financial reward was not so important.

While the first group (which crossed all stylistic and aesthetic boundaries) were concerned with attracting increased funding, and forming associations and professional organisations (*IG Jazz*, *Initiative Neue Musik*, *Dach/Musik* and the *Koalition der Freien Szene*),⁶³ members of the second group were not concerned with such lobbying or political activity, and were either content with the situation as it stood, or pessimistic that it could change for the better.

⁶³As an appendix to this section (and a topic too wide to explore directly here), a brief introduction to these associations, their political work and their relation to Berlin's general cultural/political climate of 2012/13 is given in Appendix C.

Chapter 6

Aesthetic Distinctions and Musical Lives

Directly in response to the aesthetic and stylistic boundaries already outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, this chapter identifies eight aesthetic distinctions and two umbrella terms used by Berlin's improvising musicians to distinguish between their practices - providing a contemporary survey of the diversity of styles or sub-styles which can be united under the banner of 'Improvised Music'.

The first part of this chapter identifies and describes these distinctions, and the second and third parts explain how they interact with one another - showing how musicians built musical lives from these choices and possibilities, and selected between improvised and non-improvised activities.

I will frame this discussion in terms of purists (who performed predominantly in one style, or a small range of styles) and poly-musical performers (who divided their activities between several styles),¹ as well as identifying the differences between musicians who played differently in different settings and those who, even though the setting might change, maintained their 'voice' throughout their entire output. In the case of poly-musical improvisers, this chapter will also show the underlying ideologies which united and underpinned such superficially disparate choices.

¹The term 'polymusical' is suggested by Ingrid Monson, after Mantle Hood's concept of bi-musicality, and describes musicians fluent in several musical styles [Monson, 1996, Hood, 1960]. For me, the concept is also related to Georgina Born's use of the term 'splitting', used to describe the seemingly fragmented behaviour of IRCAM musicians who 'split' different areas of musical production from each other (as well as their production and consumption, and aesthetic past and present) [Born, 1995, 296]. Rather than invoking any sense of denial and refusal between these different practices (IRCAM musicians, for example, wouldn't declare their interests in popular music to colleagues), however, I use the term more loosely here - referring only to the idea that musicians were active in several different musics (in the case of Berlin's improvisers, as section 6.3 will show, musicians were generally not secretive about their non-improvised activities, and these other musics often directly fed their improvised output).

6.1 Tastes and Distinctions: Sub-styles of Improvised Music

In Chapter 2, clear aesthetic and ideological divides were identified between American and European Free Jazz, Free Jazz and European Improvised Music, and European Improvised Music and Berlin Reductionism, posing the question of whether such divisions were still meaningful from a contemporary point of view, and what other styles of Improvised Music might have replaced or augmented them in the meantime.

Even from the point of view of the late 1990s, to assert that the Berlin Improvised Music scene was constituted of a group of like-minded performers dedicated exclusively to a homogenous form of music-making (and sharing a set of common aesthetic and ideological goals) would be a wildly optimistic proposition. And, whilst these various sub-styles nonetheless have many aspects in common, in this section I identify and summarise the various sub-genres of improvisational practice that arose during the course of fieldwork in 2013. I define these terms as they were used by musicians and listeners themselves, and, in doing so, I endeavour to show that the term ‘Improvised Music’ encompassed a range of distinct yet interconnected practices, and that these distinctions were both more numerous and more subtle than those of the 1960s, and the 1990s.²

No doubt these definitions will appear contentious - I am aware that there may be more (especially outside of Berlin and as time passes) and I am also aware of the issues of any such terminology and of the perils of summarising so ruthlessly. I do hope, however, that my understanding of these distinctions will be useful, both in the long term (for future research delineating Improvised Music practices) and in the short term (for the sake of clarity, in the chapters that follow).

Aesthetic distinctions fell into eight aesthetic categories (or sub-styles):

- Jazz, Free Jazz, Post-Free Jazz, ‘Free Jazz’ (German pronunciation)
- Free Improvisation, Free Improvised music, Abstract Improvised Music, European Improvised Music
- Berlin Reductionism, Post-Reductionist Improvising
- Electro-Acoustic Improvisation (EAI)
- Durational Music
- ‘Textural music without a jazz association’, Textural Improv

²Aside from the fact that it appears to refer to a such a range of musical practices and aesthetic criteria, many musicians found the term Improvised Music problematic because it continually fell short of explaining what they were actually doing - firstly, in terms of the mechanics of its production (see Chapter 8), but, secondly, because no-one outside of the scene had the faintest idea what the term meant - the most common response begin something like, “Ah, it’s like jazz then?”, or, “Oh, Free Jazz? That’s that thing nobody likes!”

- Noise, Acoustic Noise
- ‘All-Over’ Improv

Two umbrella terms were also used (Instant/Immediate/Real-time Music, Echtzeitmusik), and these differing Improvised Music practices were distinguished from one another according to the following criteria.

1. Jazz, Free Jazz, Post-Free Jazz, ‘Free Jazz’ (German pronunciation)

As described in Chapter 2, this was Improvised Music employing audible elements of jazz, and including swing time, walking bass-lines and bebop/post-bebop melodic (and harmonic) language. Generally, this was acoustic music with no electronics, and, from time to time, the traditional roles of soloist and rhythm section were still present (albeit in an abstract sense). Bands often took the form of brass and wind instruments with rhythm section (bass and drums, occasionally piano, guitar, vibraphone), and most of these musicians had backgrounds in modern jazz or the larger jazz tradition, despite also using materials derived from contemporary classical music.³

The term ‘Free Jazz’, with its German pronunciation, came from bass clarinettist Rudi Mahall (who pronounced jazz as ‘yatz’, to distinguish a German/European tradition from its American predecessors), and the term ‘Post-Free Jazz’ came from bassist Jan Roder. Roder explained, distancing himself from the loud and aggressive *Kaputtspielphase* of German Free Jazz, that:

We have the Improvised Music that comes out of the jazz, and out of Free Jazz, and plays with the elements of the jazz, but not only. [...]

If it’s a jazz-based Improvised Music, it has very much... the impulse and the reaction, the interplay [of jazz, but], in the ‘free-free’ jazz, there are forms where there is no communication at all - it only seems like it is. [...] That is a concept for many people, but what we do [Post-Free Jazz], is *all* about communication, and as direct as possible.⁴

Before continuing, it is also important to clarify what ‘jazz’ means in the context of the Improvised Music scene and, therefore, in this study. At no point did I hear references to current ‘stars’ of the American modern jazz scene (Dave Douglas, Brad Meldhau, Chris Potter), more ‘popular’ jazz musicians (Esperanza Spalding, Jamie Cullum, Michael Bublé), jazz fusion (Michael Brecker, Yellowjackets) or ECM musicians (Keith Jarrett, Kenny Wheeler, Jan Garbarek). Instead, references to more traditional musicians (Ben Webster, Duke Ellington, Louis Armstrong, Oscar Peterson) were far more common, as

³See pp. 26 and 41 for the influence of 20th Century classical music on American and European Free Jazz musicians and improvisers. The concept of ‘materials’, and what this means in the case of Improvised Music, will be explored in greater depth in Chapter 8.

⁴See Chapter 9 for more on reactive and non-reactive interactive stances.

were mentions of musicians on the boundaries of jazz and Free Jazz (Charles Mingus, Eric Dolphy, Jimmy Guiffre, John Coltrane, Cecil Taylor). After these musicians, jazz-related influences were generally only from the Free Jazz and Improvised Music world, and the vagueness of the term was a source of frustration for several musicians, 28-year-old drummer Christian Lillinger describing how:

That ‘jazz’ is from Peter Brötzmann to Till Brönner, that’s not possible...
there’s no definition any more.⁵

2. Free Improvisation, Free Improvised music, Abstract Improvised Music, European Improvised Music

These terms referred to Improvised Music intended to be ‘free’ of associations with other musical genres (and jazz in particular) but, nonetheless, which drew on the materials and aesthetics of *Neue Musik* - including microtonal and atonal melodic language, extended techniques, sound- and noise-based materials, and beginning at the point where Improvised Music moved away from the shadow of American jazz and Free Jazz.

Typified by first generation European improvisers such as AMM, MIC and Derek Bailey, backgrounds were mainly in jazz and classical music, and such music was performed using acoustic instruments and, occasionally, electronics. The results could be quiet and textural, as well as loud and contrapuntal, and traditional instrumental roles were forgotten - with all musicians free to contribute, equally, in whatever way they saw fit. String instruments were included, and percussionists made use of found and invented ‘objects’ and ‘classical’ percussion set-ups rather than conventional ‘trap’ kits.

Tristan Honsinger, a classically-trained cellist who had worked extensively with Bailey (the most famous protagonist of ‘non-idiomatic’ improvisation),⁶ was one of Berlin’s best examples of an ‘abstract’ European improviser, and, as he put it:

[There’s a] quality of unpreparedness about it... And it’s like starting *there* [*gesticulates, brings down arm*] and you’re in it. And it doesn’t have to do with territorial things... like when a dog comes into the territory of another dog [and] there’s this ‘wahwahwahwah’ [barking], which is something a little bit like Free Jazz was. [...]

[European Improvised Music] was more about freedom [...] and extending different techniques somehow - when you listen to Bailey, the English school

⁵The often complex relationships between improvising musicians and jazz will be explored in more depth in Chapter 7.

⁶Bailey’s notion of ‘non-idiomatic’ improvisation is especially problematic, supposedly representing a music entirely free of associations to other genres, despite the guitarist’s own jazz career and study of European classical music [Dalton, 1978, Bailey, 1993].

especially, there's a lot of extended things in it. And it is a kind of organic way of making music... a chamber music type of thing... less horn orientated.⁷

3. Berlin Reductionism, Post-Reductionist Improvising

As described in Chapter 2, Reductionism was a quiet, often silent, minimal, microscopic approach to Improvised Music-making, originating in 1990s Berlin, Tokyo, London and Vienna, and also known, internationally, as The New Silence or Lowercase Improv.⁸ Musicians had various backgrounds (self-taught, pop music, Neue Musik, as well as formally educated in jazz or classical music), and no aesthetic traces of jazz remained in a predominantly noise- and sound-based environment. Acoustic and electronic instruments were often used side-by side, and it was common for them to blend seamlessly together, with all musicians considered equal and freed from any traditional instrumental roles.

I employ the term Post-Reductionist to reference the fact that, as Björn Gottstein points out [Gottstein, 2011], many of the musicians involved in the most concentrated Reductionist period had, by 2013, moved on to other forms of music-making (improvised, composed and partially composed)⁹ and had also allowed other influences to re-enter their work. As Andrea Neumann explained:

Around 2000... the sounds got very very clear and structured... the aesthetic of machines came into the music [*she sings precise, focussed, beautiful, immaculately sculpted quiet blocks of machine-like sound, interspersed with pauses*]. Silence was also an element. [...]

[Before,] the sound was more free in a way, and how you started and ended was more open... maybe more organic. But I think maybe after 2004, after this period of this very reduced clear sound, it went more again into organic things - but maybe after we did this other thing, then afterwards, the organic thing sounded different than before.

Although it was difficult to connect the work of such Post-Reductionist musicians through any common aesthetic criteria, the connection was evidenced by a shared social history - in terms of the development of late-1990s Reductionism, and the social network which this generated (as a sub-community of the Echtzeitmusik-scene).

⁷For Honsinger, jazz only had a minimal influence on his work, "I didn't have much to do with [jazz]. When I first started improvising I knew nothing about even bebop... people said, 'Well, you should listen to Eric Dolphy, and Cecil Taylor and this and that'. And so I started to listen... And of course I was influenced and inspired by what they were doing... I started to want to play like the alto saxophone. Like the sound of it. So that was basically what I got from that movement."

⁸See p. 48 for a more complete description of Reductionism.

⁹See p. 49.

4. Electro-Acoustic Improvisation (EAI)

Electro-Acoustic Improvisation referred to Improvised Music using electronics, or instruments and electronics, and was often Neue Musik/sound art orientated, while also drawing on experimental electronic music from other genres (noise/drone/industrial/dance music). Electronics were analogue (guitar effect pedals that created loops, distortion and other processing, or mixing desks that were used to create feedback) and software/computer-based (using Max/MSP, Supercollider or Ableton Live).¹⁰

Aside from acoustic instruments and computers, musicians used ‘hacked’ keyboards, CD players (broken, and functional), children’s toys, record players and reel-to-reel tape machines.

Backgrounds were in pop music, dance music, electronic/electroacoustic Neue Musik and sound art (musicians were formally educated and self-taught),¹¹ and samples from records and CDs (musical and otherwise) and more literal sounds (such as field recordings) were employed, in a mainly noise- and sound-based soundscape. There was little pitched material, and no aesthetic references to jazz remained (except in occasional samples appropriated from jazz recordings).

5. Durational Music

Durational Music referred to Improvised Music dealing with (often extremely) long durations, and was a style that evolved among Post-Reductionist improvisers and a younger generation of Echtzeitmusik-scene related musicians (currently in their mid 30s and early 40s).

This music rarely employed aesthetic traces of jazz, although slow-changing pitches were sometimes used (as well as noises and sounds), and Andrea Neumann explained that the impetus to work with longer structures came from the observation that, usually:

We have always the same lengths... [and] you never play [the same material] longer than four minutes.

35-year-old trumpeter Nils Ostendorf, like Neumann, set out to challenge such conventions:

¹⁰Max/MSP and Supercollider are programming environments that allow musicians to build their own generative software, live-sample, perform granular synthesis, and process musicians’ acoustic sounds (among other functions). Ableton Live is a more ‘off-the-shelf’ solution.

¹¹Throughout this study I differentiate between the terms ‘electro-acoustic’ (hyphenated, meaning the combination of acoustic and electronic instruments used in Improvised Music circles) and ‘electroacoustic’ (no hyphen, referring to the Neue Musik-associated tradition of tape pieces, electronic compositions and diffusions by the likes of Stockhausen, Pierre Schaeffer and Denis Smalley).

I'm really interested in moving from one material to another one, or like having this really slow and controlled movements, or really slow developments... working on a crescendo for like 15 minutes. [...] Working on extremes, or on control... really to push the borders of this Improvised Music thing.

And for 43-year-old American reeds player Chris Heenan, in the duo Pivot:

We take things further than we want to go. Like if we have a phrase, instead of playing it five times, we might play it thirty-five times or something... We play it over and over. And then the rule is, when you feel like it's time to stop - keep going! So you're at that point where it's like "That's enough" - well - go much further! We actually had people laugh some of the times that Pivot played.

Backgrounds and instrumentations of Durational music were all-inclusive, and, again, traditional instrumental roles (such as soloist and rhythm section, or leader and accompanist) were not observed - all musicians and instruments were considered equal, and contributed equally to the process.

6. 'Textural music without a jazz association', Textural Improv

Derived from certain aspects of European Free/Abstract Improvised Music, in Textural Improvised Music, the focus was on creating a texture as a group, with all musicians equal. Sounds, noises, extended techniques and pitches were all used; however, traditional instrumental roles were no longer present - the aim being a group sound where all were subsumed in the resultant texture (as opposed to creating individual lines, as in European Free/Abstract Improvised Music). This approach was not necessarily as quiet, transparent, silent or minimal as the Reductionist school, and was often busy - rarely focussing on silence. Again, little- to no- aesthetic traces of jazz remained, and whilst any instrumentation was possible, acoustic instruments were generally preferred.

7. Noise, Acoustic Noise

Mainly electronic, noise-based, loud and harsh, Noise music was mostly based around solo performances. Almost entirely avoiding pitched material, variation was created by the manipulation and sculpting of frequencies within different 'coloured' noises, often over extended durations of up to 1 hour.

'Acoustic noise' was a term used by 49-year-old guitarist Olaf Rupp, to reference acoustic music that set out to create the same effect through the use of extended techniques on acoustic instruments.¹²

¹²The term 'analog granular synthesis' appeared on Rupp's website [Rupp, 2013], whereas the term

8. ‘All-Over’ Improv

Typified by the youngest generation in Berlin (late 20s-early 30s), but characterised here using a term introduced by Chris Heenan (who was a little older), All-Over Improv was Improvised Music that veered between any, or all, of the above aesthetics within one performance - alternating textural sections with Free Jazz, or interspersing atonal Neue Musik-like pitched music with bouts of acoustic noise. Such musicians were aware of many, or all, of the above styles of Improvised Music, and mixed them knowingly.

Two Umbrella Terms

In addition to these eight aesthetic sub-styles of Improvised Music-making, two umbrella terms (not referring to aesthetics, but to general approaches and social cliques) were also used to differentiate between different musical practices, and to conclude this section, these are briefly outlined below.

1. Instant Music, Immediate Music, Real-time Music

Not dependent on aesthetics, terms such as ‘Instant’, ‘Immediate’ and ‘Real-time’ were used to place the emphasis on energy, and the fact that music was being created ‘in the moment’ - deliberately avoiding the issues of terms such as ‘improvised’ and ‘composed’,¹³ and stylistic and aesthetic considerations.

2. Echtzeitmusik

As shown in Chapter 2, far from referring to a specific aesthetic or approach, and not to be confused with Berlin Reductionism, the term Echtzeitmusik pointed to the activities of musicians from the Echtzeitmusik-scene, which itself was defined by the social milieu of mid-1990s Mitte and Prenzlauer Berg. Many such musicians were involved in the Reductionist movement, however the Echtzeitmusik-scene also included performers working in electronic music, Neue Musik, visual art, avant-pop and performance art.¹⁴

‘acoustic noise’ was related to me by clarinettist Michael Thieke, who, one day with Rupp on the S-Bahn, was asked by some youths what kind of music he and Rupp played. The answer, rather than Improvised Music (which they considered would be meaningless to the young men they had met), was Acoustic Noise.

¹³Chris Heenan told me, “It’s funny, I have some friends in the States who are in this kind-of creative music area, but they stopped using the ‘i-word’. It kinda became the ‘i-word’, a dirty word. Because it somehow implies that you’re not thinking about it ahead of time. This is not fully true.” See Chapter 8 for more on the question of ‘How improvised is Improvised Music?’, and an Improvised Music-specific definition of the term ‘improvisation’.

¹⁴See pp. 45 and 46.

6.2 Musical Lives: Improvised Activities

As Social Network Analysis and interviews showed in Chapter 5, each of Berlin's improvising musicians had unique combinations of tastes, individual degrees of stylistic flexibility, and different attitudes to managing and manifesting the various sub-styles and aesthetics shown in section 6.1.

This diversity encompassed relative 'purists' of individual styles, bi- or poly-musical individuals who were active in several improvised sub-styles, and poly-musical performers who also composed or participated in other, non-improvised, musics.¹⁵

Such poly-musical musicians moved seemingly effortlessly between styles, and, while a certain underlying social divide still remained between jazz-based, Echtzeitmusik-related and noise/electronic musics,¹⁶ it was common for younger musicians (and a handful of older performers) to traverse these apparent boundaries.¹⁷

In changing between styles, however, musicians adopted quite different strategies - some playing with one clearly recognisable voice across all sub-styles,¹⁸ whereas others changed their voice to reflect different musical contexts (sounding, at least superficially, totally different from performance to performance).

Flexibility (or the number of sub-styles) also varied, with some musicians playing in a smaller range of more closely-related projects (again, choosing either to change their voice or to remain consistent), and this section sets out to disentangle these differing choices, beginning with the relative 'purists' of each style.

Relative Purists

As something of a purist, bass clarinetist Rudi Mahall's Improvised Music output was mainly in the Free Jazz and Post-Free Jazz area (loud, virtuosic, traditional instrumental roles maintained),¹⁹ whereas 48-year-old saxophonist Tobias Delius also played in more abstract/European Improvised Music settings (sound-based sections, non-hierarchical

¹⁵See footnote, p. 109, for definitions of bi- and poly-musicality.

¹⁶Even some 20 years after the beginnings of the Echtzeitmusik-scene and its self-professed opposition to FMP/TMM-related forms of Improvised Music, musicians coming from jazz, Free Jazz and Post-Free Jazz (Rudi Mahall, Tobias Delius, Jan Roder) were still unlikely to share the stage with Echtzeitmusik-scene (Post-)Reductionists (Burkhard Beins, Andrea Neumann) or with noisier electronic/electro-acoustic musicians (Valerio Tricoli, JD Zazie) (although electronic musicians and Echtzeitmusik/Post-Reductionists did interact, to a limited extent). See p. 101 for more on audience networks.

¹⁷The older generation interviewed here (generally in their mid-40s and early 50s, and with some exceptions) typically had relatively purist stances, moving, if at all, between just a handful of interconnected aesthetics.

¹⁸My use of the term 'voice' is defined on p. 24, musicians with such a voice being those that followers of the scene would recognise in a 'blindfold test'. I will return to the question of how musicians go about creating such a voice (or voices) as well as defining the term 'materials', in Chapter 8.

¹⁹Mahall was also involved in more conventional jazz playing, see p. 125.

group relationships, elements of theatre, silences), while a certain aesthetic connection to jazz always remained.²⁰ Bassists Jan Roder and 35-year-old Italian Antonio Borghini moved in relatively limited jazz-/Free Jazz-based circles,²¹ and so did Christian Lillinger - whose exuberant and energetic drumming (as often broken and clattering, as ferociously swinging) also occasionally extended into more textural and abstract areas.²²

Owing to their strong individual voices (idiosyncratic instrumental timbres, ‘licks’, pitch materials, instrumental and interactional techniques) such musicians became immediately recognisable after just a handful of concerts, and the same was true of many Echtzeitmusik/(Post-)Reductionist and electronic musicians²³ - 32-year-old percussionist/accordionist Hannes Lingens pointing out that:

If Lucio [Capece] plays a long soft note on the bass clarinet I think I could recognise him.

And, looking to fellow percussionist Burkhard Beins, describing how:

[He] has these two stones that he makes circular movements with, and then he puts that on the drum, [and] he puts that off the drum... [If I] hear that on a recording... I would immediately know that’s him.²⁴

Just as Mahall and Delius mostly performed with jazz-related projects, Beins was a good example of a relative purist of Echtzeitmusik/Post-Reductionist and electro-acoustic circles, and he busied himself with a medium-sized spread of activities, none of which related overtly to jazz. Even within this scope, however, Beins changed his voice (and even his instruments) between projects - his regular improvising groups including Activity Centre (acoustic percussion, crystal-clear, exquisitely-placed small sounds, bowed chime bars, papers blowing in the air),²⁵ the louder and more noise-based Perlonex (electronic and acoustic instruments), and the duo *Mensch Mensch Mensch*, where the second part of each concert consisted purely of electro-acoustic improvisation (with ‘toys’, mixing boards and specially designed electronic instruments).²⁶ For Beins:

²⁰Whitehead describes how, regardless of the context, Delius maintains a “furry post-[Ben] Webster tenor sound so big and blooming you hear all the tones inside one tone, offset by modern ideas about phrasing, harmony and form” [Whitehead, 1998, 204-5]. Delius is half-Argentinian and was born in England, before moving to Bochum, Germany, aged 10. He also doubles on clarinet.

²¹Borghini told me he found it difficult “to separate [musical] languages”.

²²As well as having played with most of the first-generation German Free Jazz musicians, Lillinger was active with the trio Dell-Westergaard-Lillinger, which focussed on what he called *Energiezustände* (energetic states) - the traditional roles of vibraphone, bass and drums subsumed in a non-hierarchical, textural, group sound.

²³Turntablist JD Zazie’s repeated use of a sample of a doorbell was an obvious example, see p. 174.

²⁴See also Ekkehard Ehler’s reference to Kai Fagashinski’s clarinet sound on p. 61.

²⁵I saw Beins with varying percussion setups: one resembling a conventional drum kit, another resembling a classical set-up with a concert bass drum turned on its side. Both were accompanied by a selection of small objects such as zither, bows, chime bars, stones and pieces of paper, as well as a selection of different sticks, brushes and mallets.

²⁶I saw *Mensch Mensch Mensch* twice, and both times it consisted of solo acoustic pieces by Beins and trumpeter Liz Allbee, before they performed in duo, using only electronics.

There's some occasions where I'm also mixing it, but mostly I have projects where I play electro-acoustic setup and others where I play totally acoustic. [...] I'm probably, at the moment, in 7, 8 or 9 ongoing working projects... of different sizes, from a couple of duos to Splitter Orchester,²⁷ which is the biggest one. And these are happening in parallel, and I really like the fact that each group is dedicated to a different specific territory of music.

Despite some sounds and techniques remaining the same throughout his projects, however, the connection between Beins' various groups was an underlying one, and appeared to be a question of ideology and approach, rather than of surface-level aesthetics. Showing how he clearly separated and changed his voices between each group, Beins explained:

Perhaps there's something recognisable that all of my projects have in common, which might show a certain approach I have in general to things. Whatever the context is, I'm thinking a lot about "What is this specific project about?", and "What does it need?" and "What does it not need?", or "What *shouldn't* be in there?"

And he also worked in such a way that each project represented a clearly defined part of his (Post-)Reductionist/Electro-acoustic/Echtzeitmusik focussed musical output - choosing his instruments and materials to match:

I really try to become aware of what's the field this specific group works in, and what shall I bring and what shall I leave back home, like objects or material, and what kind of ways of interaction have we established already, if it's a long-running project. [...] To become aware of the shape and the boundaries of that field, and what its aesthetics are, and *not* are, compared also to other projects I'm in.²⁸

Poly-Musical Improvisers, 'Splitters' and 'All-Over' Improvisers

Relative purists such as Beins, Mahall and Delius aside, other musicians traversed the apparent aesthetic and social divides of Reductionism and Free Jazz, or Electro-Acoustic Improvisation and European Abstract Improvisation, and engaged with a wider range of musicians - including purists from the above areas, as well as other poly-musical performers.

Among these musicians there were three main approaches:

²⁷See footnote, p. 100, for more on the Splitter Orchester.

²⁸Beins added that for him, the reason to have many different groups and approaches also had a practical dimension, in that, "It's good to have very different groups, like an electro-acoustic duo and a totally acoustic trio, a chamber-music-style instrumentation and a group with electronics where I play percussion... then it's more easy to think about which one to propose to a certain festival, because it would work very well there." For more on Beins' non-improvised musical activities see p. 125.

- Musicians who maintained a distinctive voice whatever the context.
- Musicians who changed their voices, techniques and materials according to the context, and consciously divided up their output.
- Musicians who created contexts where all voices and sub-styles could exist alongside each other, often over the course of a single performance.²⁹

Of the first category, guitarist Olaf Rupp, who, despite having recorded for FMP, was part of (and closer in age to) the *Echtzeitmusik* community,³⁰ described with a smile that he was perhaps, “The only player in Berlin who [had] played with Annette Krebs and Michael Wertmüller”.³¹

His projects ranged from high-energy, dense, Free-Jazz-influenced music (the trio Rupp-Mahall-Jennessen) to abstract, fast-reacting, non-jazz-orientated, textural music (*Weird Weapons*), and even into more slowly developing Post-Reductionist/Abstract music (TAM). However, by no means describing himself as a Reductionist *or* a Free Jazz musician, his signature “rasgueados, arpeggios and tremolos [refined] in such a way that they can be used for overtone and cluster effects to create new, ‘virtual’ sounds” [Rupp, 2013] were clearly to be heard in whatever context he played - the surroundings changing, but Rupp not.³²

Of the second category, 48-year-old trumpeter Axel Dörner³³ and 41-year-old clarinetist Michael Thieke were involved in a similar diversity of projects and collaborations to Rupp, however, their approach was to utilise (often) vastly differing voices between these different contexts, rather than remaining the same throughout - arguably to the point where the unknowing listener might not even recognise it was the same person playing.³⁴

Dörner moved between acoustic noise (his solo performances were sometimes constituted

²⁹Essentially this approach was the same as ‘All-over’ Improv’ (see p. 116).

³⁰See p. 44 for more on FMP. According to many sources, *Echtzeitmusik* was Rupp’s term, and, further confirming that *Echtzeitmusik* was not necessarily Reductionist music, Rupp asserted that, “At that time, the whole idea of the meaning of this word, *Echtzeitmusik*, was completely different to what it means today... I think for many of us it meant a broader approach than the FMP approach to Improvised Music... [including] the whole noise music itself... this improvised rock music stuff, and lots of other things also. [...] It felt like “Wow - we found something, something new.” [...] And then those players who play this Reduction[ist] stuff got very strong at the end of the 90s - they were very good and very developed, and so the meaning kind-of took over this.” The same sentiment is expressed in [Eichmann, 2005, 21].

³¹Guitarist Annette Krebs was central to the late-1990s Berlin Reductionist movement, whereas Michael Wertmüller, as well as being a renowned composer of *Neue Musik*, was one of Free Jazz legend Peter Brötzmann’s drummers of choice.

³²As Chapter 8 will show, a certain degree of flexibility was necessary in the repertoires of even the ‘purest’ of improvisers.

³³Dörner plays a conventional Bb trumpet, as well as an extremely rare Holton ‘Firebird’ (which has valves and a trombone-like slide).

³⁴Splitting between a wide range of projects, like Thieke and Dörner, was common to several mid-career musicians (mid-30s to early 40s), such as Clayton Thomas, Matthias Müller, Chris Heenan, Nils Ostendorf, and younger musicians such as Mike Majkowski and Hannes Lingens (both around 30), who reached further still into other styles of non-improvised music (see Chapter 6.3).

of 30-minute pieces of ever-evolving air sounds), duets with electronic musicians (Mario de Vega, Jassem Hindi), Reductionist and Post-Reductionist improvising (Splitter Orchestra, duets with Andrea Neumann, Phosphor), ‘Cool School’ jazz (Sven-Åke Johansson’s Cool Quartet) and Abstract Improvised Music (it was his term).³⁵

Thieke, on the other hand, moved between jazz/Free Jazz (*Der Lange Schatten*, *Dok Wallach*), Splitter Orchestra, fligraine microtonal duos with Bulgarian violinist Biliana Voutchkova, and bands dealing with longer, static, durational structures (*Hotelgaeste*, *The Pitch*).

Thieke and Dörner, unlike Rupp, could sound markedly different throughout these various contexts - Thieke sometimes playing 8 or 9 long tones in the space of 50 minutes, but in other cases looking towards late-1960s virtuosic post-free chamber jazz,³⁶ and Dörner resembling an atonal Chet Baker while, at other times, becoming almost mistakable for an electronic synthesiser.

For Thieke, this was nothing more than an extension of Beins’ ‘splitting’ of his projects into different domains (albeit with a wider spread of styles),³⁷ and in addition to this emphasis on creating focus between his projects, he connected his entire output to a common approach to sound, and duration-based structures:

[Even in *The Pitch*] I think I can still completely keep my sound, what I do.³⁸
[...] [Even with] these long frozen structures that we play... super-slowed down melodies... a melody that one note changes after three minutes or something... I still like to play with [the] breath sound in there - almost like a very slowed down Ben Webster vibrato. [...]

Also I find more and more... interests into long-developing structures... although one you might define as being in the jazz world, and one more in the contemporary composed.

For Dörner, the connection was more fluid, and while he used to see his jazz-related activities as separate from his work as an Abstract/Reductionist improviser, he now considered them to be much the same thing - merely utilising different materials. Dörner appeared not to be making such strong decisions about what belonged where, and didn’t

³⁵Dörner and Johansson also made more abstract Improvised Music together in the trio Barcelona Series, both utilising different voices and materials to those of the Cool Quartet.

³⁶Thieke also switched between clarinet and alto saxophone.

³⁷Like Beins, Thieke described that “In [each project], for me it’s really important to have an idea of what that band’s about, and to know also what’s my language, my vocabulary... the language I want to use and the language I want to exclude. Because I don’t want to put my jazz vocabulary in certain projects, [and] also the more noise language doesn’t make sense in other projects I’m in. [...] I like also... that it gives me the chance to have really different focusses, and the chance really not to repeat myself too much.” See also p. 126 for the ideological reasons uniting Thieke’s entire output.

³⁸Thieke described this sound as having “a certain smoothness” relative to “this more powerful free-jazz thing that I was interested in in the 90s”, and pointed to fellow clarinetist Jimmy Giuffre as an influence “[He’s] an abstract player, but he has not the rough edge as many Free Jazz players would have.” See p. 26 for more on Giuffre.

exclude any materials from specific contexts ahead of time, describing how his different tastes were defined by his personal history, as well as by an underlying ideology that related to all the music he played:

There was a time [when] suddenly I wanted to play in a way that it sounds more abstract. It reminded [me] very much [of] electronic music. [...] I got very interested in avant-garde classical music, and so I listened to Morton Feldman, John Cage, Stockhausen and music like this. Luigi Nono. [...] This was a whole new world also opening up, and I got influenced by this in the way I was improvising.

Emphasising the late-1990s divide between jazz- and Echtzeitmusik-scene-related improvisers, he went on that:

There were different kinds of people, so all these things went parallel... I never gave up playing with the so-called jazz musicians, because I liked this music, and I still like it very much. And so it's changing all the time. Sometimes I'm more into this, sometimes I'm more into that... it's *music* that's very important to me.

And he described how, with time, this gap had narrowed:

For me, now, it's the same thing. Because it used to be that it became very difficult for me to play what's called 'jazz', and the other more abstract music, with sounds only, and no normal trumpet notes any more. They were quite separate for a while. But... for me now it's basically the same thing, but expressed in a very different way. [...]

It's difficult to explain, because it's not possible to hear it immediately. But it's a kind of structure. An intelligent way of structuring music... and a certain kind of spirit. And also, that the moment... the *Präsenz* is very important, present time is very very important. [...] That's the same, in all these kinds of music.³⁹

The biggest difference between Thieke and Dörner, however, was that while Thieke (like Beins) consciously divided up his projects (almost always excluding certain materials and approaches according to the context of each group), Dörner also had groups where all of his voices and materials were allowed to exist side-by-side, and could be moved between freely (Hook Line and Sinker, Mrs. Conception).

This 'all-over' form of Improvised Music (incorporating many sub-styles, and various voices and musical materials) linked Dörner to the third, and final, category of this

³⁹Dörner, referring to composer Bernd Alois Zimmermann's concept, *Die Kugelgestalt der Zeit*, explains that, "*Präsenz* could mean that time is changing in a way which the future and past and present time become a certain kind of unit [that] you can move in." Further explanation of this concept is given on p. 188.

section, and this category, defined by those who alternated between several aesthetics and voices over the course of a single performance, was best typified by cellist Tristan Honsinger (as well as several younger musicians in their late-20s and early-30s, and especially those performing in Sowieso, the salon and The Great Heisenberg).⁴⁰ In this area, a typical concert might include elements of jazz, Neue Musik-influenced virtuosity, theatrical vocal outbursts and melodies with the simplicity of children's songs, and these approaches were united by the single rule that all of these styles (and more) could, and should, be allowable and possible.⁴¹

To Summarise

While the musicians discussed in this section represented the widest extremes of performers dealing with multiple sub-styles of Improvised Music, others nonetheless located themselves within this framework - allowing themselves more or less flexibility, in terms of both their own voice (or voices) and the range of aesthetics (or sub-styles) in which they participated.

To conclude this section, the following list summarises these positions, and proposes the extremes of the continuum within which Berlin's improvisers situated their musical lives and practices:

1. Musicians with a voice/set of musical materials that were instantly recognisable, and stayed more-or-less constant:
 - who played in a relatively confined set of styles (Mahall).
 - who played with musicians from a wide range of different sub-styles of Improvised Music (Rupp).
2. Musicians who changed their voice/materials between different performances and bands, and who considered that what united their work was on a deeper, more conceptual level:
 - for whom it was important that each project had a separate function, and who consciously left things in, and out, of each context (Thieke, with a wider spread; Beins, with a lesser).
 - who may have had some projects where things were separate, but who also created projects where everything was possible, and several different

⁴⁰Of those interviewed here, Els Vanderweyer, trumpeter Reuben Lewis and Anna Kaluza (especially with the Haman Quartet).

⁴¹Honsinger was an inspiration to many musicians interested in this approach - drummer Steve Heather explaining, "What I love about [playing with Tristan is that] you can just go anywhere", and 23-year old newcomer Reuben Lewis commenting, following his first performance with Honsinger at Sowieso, that, "We went everywhere. It was an absolutely wild ride!".

voices/materials were explored within the bounds of one performance (Dörner).

3. Musicians who played in projects only where everything is possible, and all musical influences, voices and sub-styles could manifest within one group, and one performance (Honsinger).

6.3 Musical Lives: Other Musical Activities

So far, this chapter has concentrated mainly on musicians whose lives were centred around Improvised Music-making, and yet, as quantitative research revealed, at least a third of Berlin's improvisers were also active as composers, and almost all participated in other forms of art and music (Figure 6.1).⁴² This section discusses the relationship between these activities, as well as identifying the various (personal) ideologies which united each musician's output and activities.

Jazz, Free Jazz	32%
Sound Art, Field Recording, Electroacoustic Music	13%
Classical Music, Neue Musik (performer or composer)	24%
Noise, Industrial, Drone	10%
Theatre, Dance, Poetry	26%
Rock, Pop, Punk, 'World'	15%
Uses Electronics	38%
Active as a Composer (any genre)	33%

Figure 6.1: Other practices and interests of Berlin's improvisers. Categories were not mutually exclusive.

Of those mentioned already, Axel Dörner had occasional interests in dance, theatre and electronic music,⁴³ as well as composing for more jazz-based bands such as *Die Enttäuschung*⁴⁴ and playing in Sven-Åke Johansson's Cool Quartet. Rudi Mahall and Christian Lillinger were well-known in the German and international jazz scenes for their work with the groups *Der Rote Bereich* and *Hyperactive Kid*,⁴⁵ Tristan Honsinger composed for dance and theatre (at the time of our interview he was writing a piece for an amateur choir in Italy), and Burkhard Beins was dealing with partially-composed pieces that bordered on Neue Musik with the group *Polwechsel*,⁴⁶ while also presenting his installations *Sekante* and *Modulation I* in Quiet Cue, and composing electroacoustic

⁴²Of those interviewed, only Olaf Rupp and Chris Heenan were active purely in the field of Improvised Music during 2012-13. All the terms used here ('classical', 'pop', 'drone' and so on) are of course problematic and are employed loosely - in the sense to which they were referred to during interviews and on musicians' websites. The term 'classical music' was taken as referring to pre-20th Century European classical music, in order to distinguish it from Neue Musik (20th-21st Century classical music).

⁴³Dörner described occasional performances with dancer Takako Suzuki, where he recorded location-specific sounds before creating a 4-channel electroacoustic piece, which he then improvised to on trumpet, also moving around on the stage.

⁴⁴Literally, 'The Disappointment'. Along with pianist Alexander von Schlippenbach, *Die Enttäuschung* also recorded and performed the complete compositions of jazz pianist Thelonius Monk, under the title 'Monk's Casino'.

⁴⁵*Der Rote Bereich* (in its longest-running line-up of Mahall, Frank Möbus and John Schröder) was one of Germany's most influential modern jazz groups of the mid-1990s and 2000s. Lillinger (of *Hyperactive Kid*) told me, "I played a lot completely free, but I have a ton of bands that play compositions too", his own project, *Grund*, a good example.

⁴⁶*Polwechsel* was an international ensemble that has existed in various configurations since 1993, previous members including John Butcher and Radu Malfatti. The group was a great influence on many Reductionist/Post-Reductionist improvisers interviewed in this thesis, including Beins himself (see p. 141).

music.

Michael Thieke, in addition to his wide-ranging improvised activities, was involved in ‘avant-pop’ project The Magic I.D. and Neue Musik composition (The International Nothing),⁴⁷ and, once again, Thieke expressed the connection between these different styles and projects as one of identity - his choices united by ideals of collective creativity, and a distinct ‘underground’ or non-mainstream mentality:

What is common is that they all have a non-mainstream thing... whether it’s composed music with [The International Nothing], or the more jazz-related stuff, or this song project [the Magic I.D.], that kind of goes not really close, but in the direction of pop music. But... they never get there to be ‘jazz-jazz’, or ‘pop’ music, or ‘classical composed’ music - it’s just always this one step before it stops. [...]

I listen to a lot of stuff... from noise to strange folk... but usually I don’t like the popular stuff that then makes it successful. Not as a principle, but just it turns out that it’s something which I think is underground, or independent... not independent as a musical style, but [as] a description of how people work - that interests me more... than the very mainstream artists.

Such a range of activities was typical of others from Echtzeitmusik community, and, like Thieke and Beins (and as the history of the scene itself suggests), it was usual that these musicians had a range of parallel interests in visual art, installation, sound art, electronic music, popular music, theatre, dance and performance.⁴⁸

Around the time of our interview, Andrea Neumann was preparing for a performance in composer/performer Chico Mello’s music-theatre piece *Pills or Serenades*,⁴⁹ working on a composition for glissando-flute and tape, and preparing music for all-female composer/performer ensemble *Les Femmes Savantes*.

And, from the electronic music world, 39-year-old Italian turntablist JD Zazie was running a festival for women in experimental music (*MuseRuole*), working (live and for radio) as an experimental electronic DJ,⁵⁰ and a key member of the Burp Enterprise collective.⁵¹ On top of this she described how:

⁴⁷See [Fagashinski, 2011], and p. 219.

⁴⁸See Chapter 2.3.

⁴⁹*Pills or Serenades* was premiered in the 2013 edition of Neue Musik festival *Maerzmusik*, and in this, Neumann played normal (upright) piano, sang and acted (usually in her Improvised Music performances, she played her ‘inside piano’ exclusively, with and without electronics). Neumann has also created her own pieces for theatre, including ‘*auch nicht eigentlich mehr und vielleicht sogar gar nicht*’, for the *Maulwerker* ensemble (2001).

⁵⁰Although she disliked the term ‘experimental’, this was felt to be the best-fitting and most easily recognisable description of her work.

⁵¹Burp Enterprise was a collective concerned with experimental music (improvised and composed). Originally based in Florence, Burp developed into an Italian-German collective, following Zazie, and vocalist Mat Pogo’s, move to Berlin.

I do some sound installations... I'm doing workshops with Felicity Ford on documenting sound art festivals with field recordings and workshops on radio production, [and] I also founded Studio Urban Resonance with architect Olaf Schäfer. Our idea is to focus on the sonic aspects of the built environment in order to design urban space.⁵²

Zazie united her activities under the umbrella of sound-based activities,⁵³ and violinist Biliana Voutchkova (who was also well known as an interpreter of Neue Musik and worked extensively with dancers)⁵⁴ described her musical life as:

I play the violin, and... I do all kind of musics, one being improvised. But if I can generalise, overall, basically I do New Music. So classical new, contemporary new music, or my own new music, or improvised new music. [...] [It's always] something that is somehow related to the now. [...] That's the connection between all the different genres, if you wanna call them that.⁵⁵

Like Thieke, this was related to a certain sense of identity:

You live a certain way and you have certain values in your life, and if they are somewhat more modern in some way or... a bit more open-minded... somehow that naturally leads into your artistic outcome. And I was playing classical music... Beethoven, Brahms, Mozart, which is completely not corresponding to my lifestyle in general. I think that was also a way to connect somehow, to make my life somewhat more coherent within this frame.

And, just as musicians' engagement with improvised forms varied, so did the diversity of their non-improvised musical and artistic interests, these including:

- Neue Musik (Voutchkova, Mike Majkowski, Hannes Lingens, the Wandelweiser

⁵²Zazie elaborated, "For us sound is an important element to be considered during the planning process, for better social living. In architecture and urban planning, sound is not much considered, apart when it starts to be a problem (noise and social conflicts) or when it's about building specific architecture dedicated to performative activities (as theatres). With different approaches, we are trying to define possible ways of doing it.. from the architectural one (I have also a background in architecture) to the artistic one - related to site-specific projects (sound art) [and] to the practice of field recordings as well."

⁵³She also used field recordings from her architectural work in Improvised Music contexts.

⁵⁴Voutchkova organised the improvised dance/music series OSM (Open Sound and Music) and the group Grapeshade.

⁵⁵Voutchkova added, "[I] incorporate certain things from the approach of playing improvisation into my written music playing, and the other way round... There is [a] certain sense in being completely concentrated, focussed, reading music, going through it and just being there, that you can somehow transfer into improvisation... the precision in the clarity of what comes out [of the composed music]... And at the same time... the freedom of improvisation that I could somehow transfer into written music [is to] find this room - this volume into the notes and the precision, that I go around them somehow... If there is a little phrase, somehow I phrase it in such a way that it's a bit more free... it's a sensitivity thing."

group)⁵⁶

- African and other ‘world’ musics (Mike Majkowski, 30-year-old Belgian vibraphonist Els Vandeweyer)⁵⁷
- Popular music (many electronic musicians also DJ-ed, as did 36-year-old Australian bassist Clayton Thomas, who had aspirations to make a hiphop record).

To conclude this section, however, and representing one of the largest and most varied aesthetic and social networks, and possibly the scene’s most poly-musical performer, a short portrait of Australian drummer and percussionist Steve Heather serves to exemplify not only the diversity of styles and approaches that surrounded and influenced the Improvised Music scene, but also the number of musics and voices that it was possible for one musician to practice, and have.

In his mid-40s, Heather’s activities ranged from jazz/post-free-jazz improvising (Booklet, who would readily throw in a Duke Ellington number or Jimi Hendrix song during their improvisations, or Mrs Conception, which began life as a jazz standards project, but, more recently, came to include abstract and sound/noise-based materials), to dance and theatre projects,⁵⁸ and pop/rock-related bands such as The Still and TUB (who played Improvised Music using the materials of 1970s stadium rock).⁵⁹ Formerly living in Amsterdam, Heather was one of the founders of *Kraakgeluiden* (an electroacoustic/improvised/noise series that took place every Monday night for around 6 years in an Amsterdam squat),⁶⁰ and had played a considerable amount of part-composed/part-improvised Neue Musik in composer Alison Isadora’s group,

⁵⁶The Wandelweiser group was an international collective of composers (incorporating a record label and publishing house) including Michael Pisaro, Antoine Beugher, Manfred Werder, Radu Malfatti and Peter Ablinger. The group was concerned with creating composed works which left many aspects to be realised by their performers in real-time, and the group had many interests in common with Reductionist and Post-Reductionist improvisers (silences, subtle gradations of extremely quiet dynamics, working with an extremely limited set of musical materials, the influence of John Cage), as well as a considerable social overlap [Pisaro, 2009]. Wandelweiser performers also arranged concerts in venues used for Improvised Music, such as Ausland and O Tannenbaum.

⁵⁷Majkowski drew an interesting comparison between playing Durational Improvised Music and African music, “I can relate to it... because a lot of this music that I have been playing recently with the bass guitar, is like repeating a groove, and somehow there’s no start or no end to it... from the beginning it’s already happening... like a monumental path. And I also like doing that with my solo stuff, like tremolo for 15 minutes, just this monumental kind of strip” (see p. 216 for more on Majkowski’s solo output).

⁵⁸Heather also had a performance group with his wife Siegmund Zacharias (they have created rock operas and musicals together), as well as directing his own performance pieces, including (on different occasions) snare drums with confetti and indoor fireworks. In such cases, Heather often operated under the guise of his alter ego, Stiff Leather.

⁵⁹Heather described how in TUB (The Understated Brown), “Generally we play [song] structures. But the material we’ve chosen is basically 70s kind-of stadium rock material. But in the end the methods of improvising are the same, just that the materials are different. [...] There’s a whole kind of gestural thing that’s really different, but there’s the same idea of counterpoint and developing things, creating the sound. It’s all very, for me, similar to playing in other musics, but the material is very different. So we’ve worked on all these songs, doing covers of Supertramp and Boston [etc.], but then we take all that material and then go, ‘OK, let’s just play it, improvise with it.’”

⁶⁰*Kraakgeluiden* was co-founded with flautist/composer Anne LeBerge and pianist/composer Cor Fuhler.

Aardvark.

Heather could be heard playing laid-back rock grooves, covering his drumset (which often featured an extraordinarily large old-style bass drum) with twigs and leaves, bowing a delightful selection of small objects unpacked from a battered Rimowa suitcase, playing abstracted swinging jazz brushes, or adding one crystal-clear tone at a time to a Splitter Orchestra performance, where he actually played vibraphone. And just like Thieke, Voutchkova and Beins, the connection between Heather's many projects was one of approach and conceptualisation - instead of generating one voice or aesthetic common to all of his work, his philosophy was founded in the idea of a collective work ethic, and an expression of a certain sensitivity and humility towards each situation:

It's the same with playing all kinds of language actually... [whether] you're playing with a rock thing or a noise thing, it's about having an understanding of how your sounds work together... This essential kind of sonic melding, that's just something you need to work on... Where everyone sits in the band... how you develop stuff, and how you shape a piece.

I like to do a broad spectrum of things, because for me they all feed each other... it's just this language that interconnects somehow, and it's just about trying to be tasteful in each one.⁶¹ [I find] the way things work sonically really fascinating, and that's exactly the same [in noise music] as guitar, bass and drums.

Heather added that:

The work in theatre, and with dance... has been amazing in terms of just dealing a lot more with conceptual stuff... learning about different philosophies or theories or ways of artistic practices... and also just working with people from different fields has really helped to widen my choices and aesthetic in music.⁶²

And he also discussed that, for him, the only potential problem posed by a musical life encompassing so many diverse approaches was one of physicality:

If I've done a lot of one thing, the physicality related to another way of playing is altered, so you have to kind-of get back into the physical character of it... It's really quite hard to go from scratchy-improv-type-noise-stuff to going into really relaxed grooves where it's like a really slow development, because your physicality is really wired in a different way... mentally you

⁶¹From this point of view, Heather described how in the 24-piece Splitter Orchester, "It's kind-of [about] finding a position in there... finding the right place and the right point to kind-of counterpoint everything else, to find a space for my voice that will then kind of contribute to expanding the palette of the whole group."

⁶²He added, "Listening to music with people not from a musical background [has really helped me] to understand the way they perceive what they're hearing."

have to let a lot of things go.

Chapter 7

Getting In: Routes into Improvised Music

Having shown something of a cross-section of the structure and diversity of Berlin's Improvised Music scene in Chapters 5 and 6, I now turn the gaze of this study to the personal histories and development of its musicians (and listeners), focussing on how musicians first came into contact with such hidden or 'underground' music, and examining how they gained the skills, education and experience necessary to pursue a musical vocation not offered by formal educational channels or (often) even recognised there.

7.1 First Contacts and the Attraction to Improvised Music

For most of Berlin's musicians and listeners, their first contact to Improvised Music was something of a haphazard affair, almost exclusively extra-curricular, and with neither school nor home providing anything other than the most basic level of (musical) cultural capital.¹

Exceptionally, Clayton Thomas' parents were professional rock'n'roll musicians,² Axel Dörner's grandmother was a concert pianist, and, prior to becoming a housewife, Rudi Mahall's mother had been an opera singer. Otherwise, just a few others of those interviewed here came from households with extensive collections of classical and mainstream jazz recordings.³

¹Or little more than, "the conventions known to all well-socialized [*sic*] members of a society" [Becker, 2008, 46].

²Thomas commented, "My dad is this kind of guitar player/singer/songwriter who made a career out of being able to play every song on the radio, and any song you've ever known."

³Mike Majkowski recalled finding a Charles Mingus CD in his parents' record collection aged 15 or

Others had parents who were amateur musicians of various levels of skill and engagement, however none of these were active in, knowledgeable about, or seemingly the least bit interested in Improvised Music.

Els Vandeweyer and 41-year-old trombonist Matthias Müller grew up in families active in local brass bands,⁴ Steve Heather's father was a rock'n'roll drummer and his mother played stride piano ("they'd dance rock'n'roll... at parties and stuff... we'd all end up singing"), Tobias Delius' mother sang ("she played flute as a kid, but her brothers and her sister... can sing in four part harmony... and every now and then, when they're drunk enough, they'll do that"), and for Tristan Honsinger:

My father played a bit of piano, and my mother played some flute, but they were real fans of good music, so I had that from the beginning... jazz, classical music, folk, what have you.

For Müller, and many others however, music didn't play anything like such a significant role in home life. Müller remembered that, outside the *Posaunenchor*,⁵ his parents only rarely listened to recorded music (if so, pop music or occasionally Bach), and several interviewees described their parents as having "no taste" in music - one telling me that home life was based around "cheesy pop music", and adding that:

My mother had some classical records, but it was more like... *kleinbürgerlicher* attitude, to at least have a little high-brow culture.⁶

How then, did musicians with such backgrounds - on the whole, growing up in small towns and the countryside, in an era before the online music revolution (and before the possibility to research and mail-order obscure music from the internet) - come to hear about, and become involved in, the Improvised Music tradition at all?

Over the course of research (and aside from a few musicians who developed almost entirely in isolation, or discovered Improvised Music through classical and Neue Musik),⁷ two main routes into Improvised Music emerged - the first, through jazz and Free Jazz, and the second, through experimental rock and experimental electronic music.

Both of these routes had certain aspects in common: chance meetings with "special",

16 (a band including Eric Dolphy, and a CD split with Thelonius Monk), Rudi Mahall's father had a collection of records that went up to around 1950s West Coast jazz ("Sonny Rollins was already too much for him"), and trumpeter Nils Ostendorf also recalled that "My grandfather was really into jazz, and I really remember listening to Louis Armstrong, and Roy Eldridge. [...] I really loved it when I was a kid... listening to those old records when we were on holiday in France. That was also probably one of the reasons I got into trumpet." Dörner was similarly inspired by the Armstrong records in his father's collection.

⁴Vandeweyer, the daughter of farmers, told me "All the brothers and sisters of my father, all their children are playing... so [there are] almost 60 people, and I think 32 are my family."

⁵Literally "Trombone Choir", a German brass band tradition centred around the church.

⁶*Kleinbürgerlich* translates as *petit-/petty-Bourgeois*. He added that the interest in classical music "was the interest of my mother, my father never really cared."

⁷See the portrait of Olaf Rupp (p. 141), as well as the stories of Tristan Honsinger (p. 113, p. 150) and Biliana Voutchkova (p. 152).

“crazy” and “weird” people leading to new information and experiences; a pre-existing need for, and resonance with, the energy, intensity and ideology of such musics; a curiosity or pre-disposition for the unknown and the non-mainstream; and a determination and capacity for self-directed research and learning that allowed these aspiring improvisers to progress beyond the means immediately available to them.

‘Special People’, Sharing Records, and Self-Directed Research

While each musician had their own particular constellation of circumstances and ensuing experiences, the above list of possible experiences was common to all, and a typically unique (yet representative) story came from bassist, archivist and historian Klaus Kürvers.

Kürvers, then aged 12, inherited a record player from his grandfather, along with a selection of discs that included singers from the 30s and some light operetta, or as he described it, “*richtige Scheiss-Musik*”⁸. Despite these discs, however, he loved the machine (he was also fascinated by its workings) and this led him to visit a local record store, where he asked, simply, if there were any records available which *didn’t* have singing on - this question leading to a swift redirection to the back of the shop, and a section marked ‘Jazz’. Like Axel Dörner and Nils Ostendorf, his first record was Louis Armstrong, and, shortly followed by the Oscar Peterson Trio,⁹ the young Kürvers delighted that:

Every time I heard these [jazz] records they were totally fresh, compared to the *Schlager* [pop] records.

Shortly after, Kürvers found a weekly jazz club in the local youth centre (where members brought new records and played them to each other), and this introduced him to the mid-1960s experiments of Gunter Hampel and Wolfgang Dauner, as well as, “an authentic German-European music that wasn’t just a badly done version of American jazz”.¹⁰ Regular broadcasts provided by Radio Hilversum¹¹ and the *Voice of America Jazz Hour* (Sunday evenings at 1am - “I listened to it under the bedcovers”) also provided valuable new material and information.

Around this time, as well as the youth centre’s jazz club, Kürvers had an older school friend with whom he exchanged records, and such friendships were also common to musicians who discovered Improvised Music by means of more widely known experimental rock and electronic music releases - Burkhard Beins, for example, counterpointing releases

⁸ “Really shit music!”

⁹ See p. 136, for the influence of Peterson on Rudi Mahall too.

¹⁰ See Kürvers’ comments on the need for a European music (p. 32), and p. 35 for more on Hampel and Dauner.

¹¹ Michael Droiter, the producer of Eric Dolphy’s famous *Last Date* recordings, hosted regular Improvised Music/Free Jazz studio sessions, including one of the first recordings of Dutch ensemble ICP.

from Frank Zappa, Negativland, This Heat, Cabaret Voltaire, Tuxedomoon and Zoviet France with those of British experimental composers,¹² Brian Eno's *Obscure Records* LP series and late-1970s ECM jazz.

Through his own network of fellow collectors, Beins came into contact with Improvised Music in the form of a Steve Lacy solo album and the Alexander von Schlippenbach/Sven-Åke Johansson duo,¹³ and, somewhat later, 35-year-old Italian electronic musician Valerio Tricoli received a similar introduction to "John Zorn- and Jim O'Rourke-related stuff"¹⁴ by "a wierd guy" at school, which, in turn, led him to a series of Improvised Music house-concerts, and Bologna's Link Project:

They were making a lot of money with really great techno parties... but before the techno party you would have [a touring] indie rock band playing, and before [that] you would have... Kevin Drumm and Axel Dörner playing duo, for instance.

Beins told me he discovered some of his most important later influences (*musique concrète*, Edgar Varèse) through the work of Zappa and Eno, and listener David Diaz, who had something of a similar background, described how:

Through Van der Graaf Generator I also discovered certain aspects of Free Jazz [including] Soft Machine... [who] featured some important players of the British avant-jazz scene. [...] The reminiscences [*sic*] of Coltrane/Coleman/Taylor were [also] evident in their music.¹⁵

As well as schoolfriends, other 'special people' important for these first connections

¹²He listed Gavin Bryars, early Michael Nyman, David Cunningham and John White.

¹³Johansson later became a regular duo partner of Beins and, like many (especially younger) musicians, Beins stressed that, "You tend... to say 'then I went into *that*, and then I became *this* and *this*...', but in fact it was all happening at the same time."

¹⁴Ralf Wehowsky, Gastr del Sol, and others that he described as "kind-of-like songs, but with a lot of fucked-up things". Tricoli also referenced the Gastr del Sol record *Upgrade & Afterlife*, which included contributions from improvisers including Kevin Drumm and Mats Gustafsson, as well as the use of Tricoli's main instrument - a Revox reel-to-reel tape machine. Almost exceptionally in this study, jazz played no part in Tricoli's musical taste ("Jazz? I never listened to jazz... No part of myself whatsoever! Like zero. Zero."), and he described his only influence from jazz-related musics as having once enjoyed Derek Bailey and (dancer) Min Tanaka's record *Music and Dance* whilst high on mushrooms, as well as some electronic-based records from the likes of Drumm, Christian Fennesz and John Zorn's *Tzadik* label.

¹⁵Diaz also mentioned King Crimson, who at some point included Jaimie Muir in their lineups, Diaz at this time having no idea about Muir's parallel involvement with British Improvised Music (see p. 41). He also went on to describe Pink Floyd's *Dark Side of the Moon* as a gateway to instrumental music in general (Beins and Olaf Rupp both cited the album *Ummagumma*), and told me how, "Vocals were as important as instrumental parts... songs were not songs... but part of some bigger, huger instrumental fresco... there was some kind of interconnecting narrative throughout the whole thing. [...] In particular, there was the experience of listening to the last track of the A-Side of that album, which was an hour-plus instrumental, plus improvised vocal track... I was discovering that, for me, what attracted my attention or was important in terms of musical sensibility at that time was textures, harmonic colour, sound qualities and atmospheres, rather than melodic lines with a clearly defined contour."

to jazz, experimental rock and improvised music came from all walks of life,¹⁶ and Tobias Delius remembered a family friend who was a Sonny Rollins fan, an uncle who played in dance bands, and a professional piano player he met whilst on a 6-month sojourn in Mexico, as all pointing him in the right direction at various stages of his development. Again, typical of the kind of unorthodox individuals favoured by many such musicians:

[In Mexico] I bumped into this crazy guy who'd had a gig every night for years in a restaurant...¹⁷ and he was a real freak. [...] He'd learnt everything off the record[s], and he'd written it out, he had books at home full of like *Unit Structures* [by] Cecil Taylor, with bass part and drum part - completely over the top! [...] I was very lucky to meet this character.

And for the teenage Jan Roder, who, like Delius, was also on a trip to South America, the father of one of his (rock/heavy-metal) friends turned out to be a jazz guitarist, and another friend from his German hometown had visited a jazz summer school in the USA. Accordingly, Roder was introduced to the recordings of jazz musicians including Wes Montgomery and Thelonius Monk, and a chance encounter with Cecil Taylor's "great" Paris Concert provided the breakthrough moment for Roder's own conversion to Improvised Music:

We were always playing rock music, and... [my friend] bought this record... One day I came to his place and he said, "Hey, you want that? I bought this because I thought it was good, but I don't like it - you want it?" [laughs]... He was into Jimi Hendrix, but he knew the name - somehow he was always interested and ordered this somewhere because he'd read about it. And I tried it, and was like, "Wow!" I never heard something like that before [*makes exploding noise*].

Remembering Michael Thieke's non-mainstream description of his wide-ranging musical activities,¹⁸ the alternative, 'crazy', 'weird' and non-conventional was often part of the attraction to these musics, Burkhard Beins telling me that, "I was listening to everything that was off-mainstream already, when I was young", and Klaus Kürvers described how, when an older school-mate tried to shock him with the music of Dolphy, Mingus, Taylor and Ornette Coleman:

Actually I loved it, and [my friend] was totally frustrated that I wasn't at all shocked! It was really amazing. [...] Such fresh music... totally interested me.

¹⁶Some teachers were also included in these 'special people' (see p. 150).

¹⁷At the time, it was the law in Mexico that if you wanted an alcohol licence then you had to employ a live band. Delius also considered the encounter important because it inspired him to consider music part of everyday life.

¹⁸See p. 126.

The Connection, the Intensity and the Energy

Like Roder, almost all of the musicians and listeners I interviewed could clearly recall the ‘eureka’ moment that drew them, seemingly instantly, into the decision to dedicate their lives to music - the energy and intensity that all these musics offered, even if they didn’t understand them at first, proving irresistible.

For Clayton Thomas, arriving in New York in his early 20s:

It was the basic thing of being within a large group of people and having this constant dialogue about music as a meaningful personal expressive, current thing... not about, “I want to play like someone”, not about, “Try to make money”, not about trying to have hits, not about ego games... just to [make] music about creativity on its essential root. [...] I just related to that in a way that I didn’t relate to the idea of genre... it was like, “This is music about my personal connection to vibration.”

For Rudi Mahall, who visited an Oscar Peterson trio concert at the age of 13:

I sat pretty close to the front and it just tore me apart - I can still remember that feeling today, how I felt when it really *schwingt wie Sau!*¹⁹

And for Mike Majkowski, on finding that first Mingus CD in his parents record collection:

It just totally blew my mind... the music really had a presence, it really spoke. It really had this energy. And I was kind of like “wow” [...] The next day I was playing the double bass... from hearing that record I was like “OK, ‘bang’... this is what I’m going to do now.”

This energy and intensity was the same for those coming from experimental rock - Olaf Rupp describing how, having bought the Pink Floyd album *Ummagumma*:

I bought this record and I couldn’t listen to it. I just listened to it centimetre by centimetre, and I was proud for every centimetre I listened to, because it was so tenseful [*sic*], and that was so strange for me.

And for Hannes Lingens, who came to “more complicated or more complex stuff like all this John Zorn shit like Naked City and Painkiller” from playing “hardcore punk stuff”:

There was this kind of energy and excitement... that after a while I didn’t find any more in this well-organised [composed] stuff... I found that then in Free Improvised Music. [...] You have this idea of several, multiple layers going on at the same time, and... after a while [that’s] maybe just more interesting and more challenging for the listener.

¹⁹‘Swung like hell’, or literally, ‘swung like a pig’.

From these fortuitous moments, and whether with Charles Mingus, Pink Floyd or Cecil Taylor, personal research began into these traditions and what surrounded them - for all of the musicians and listeners interviewed here, leading inevitably deeper into the Improvised Music tradition. And whilst for some, the connection was easy and immediate, for others (like Rupp's introduction to Pink Floyd), understanding and enjoyment came only later.

Rudi Mahall recalled how:

I bought *Unit Structures* by Cecil Taylor, I listened to it, and the first time I heard it, it made me feel totally sick! [...] I really felt unwell!

But undeterred, and turning to his local library:

I borrowed Ekkehard Jost's book... which had explanations of what was going on from minute to minute. And after that, after I understood it, suddenly I liked it a lot. Funny. And then I couldn't get enough of this kind of music. [...]

It explained exactly what was happening. For me it was total chaos, but actually... there are various composed parts that just weren't so normal compared to the jazz I knew. And then suddenly there were tempo changes, and then there's a sign and a new theme starts, and so on. And then I heard all of that, and from then on it went pretty quick.

I read it while I was listening to it, just like you'd read a piano reduction if you were at the opera, and then I *got* it - clear, logical... I needed it.

With the help of such books,²⁰ Mahall was able to introduce himself to jazz and early Free Jazz, and for musicians of all generations, these texts were often important entry points to these more 'difficult' musics.

The process was one of trial-and-error - Michael Thieke laughed at having once bought *Masterplan* by 1980s New York virtuoso fusion drummer Dave Weckl and an Art Ensemble of Chicago disc at the same time (simply from the curiosity of having read about both).²¹ And, representative of many coming from experimental rock, Spanish listener David Diaz recalled reading about John Coltrane and ("probably") Peter Brötzmann in interviews with the saxophone player of Van der Graaf Generator,²² while

²⁰These texts included the books by Jost, Berendt and Noglik cited in Chapter 2, as well as Shapiro/Hentoff's *Jazz Erzählt (Hear Me Talkin' to Ya)* [Shapiro and Hentoff, 1959] and the work of journalists including John Fordham and John Corbett.

²¹Weckl, with his signature mullet haircut is something of a hero of jazz-fusion music and drum-clinic culture (considered fairly tasteless by those interviewed here, and well-known for performing concerts where his virtuoso 'chops' were projected, live, onto video screens behind him). The Art Ensemble of Chicago was also important for Axel Dörner and drummer Yorgos Dimitriadis, among others.

²²Diaz found Berendt's book "encouraging" because he, "also somehow incorporated some of the prog-rockers into his narrative". See also p. 134.

many younger musicians arrived at various forms of Neue Musik, electronic music and Improvised Music through articles in the *Wire* magazine.

These materials, as well as sympathetic record shops and good mail-order services, formed the roots of many of the musicians here, and Clayton Thomas, who started collecting jazz LPs age 17, described how:

I did a [jazz] radio show where I had like 5 jazz records... this is like a time before Google-searching who's-related-to-who, and I'm in Liverpool,²³ so I'm going to the record shop and trying to find out, "Ah... Jimmy Cobb's on *this* and Chick Corea's on *this*...", and, "I like John Coltrane on *this* record..." So, hunting for these spiderweb connections, and going, "Ok, well that sucks there", "I don't like *that*, but I like *that*".²⁴

In almost every case in this study, these self-directed listening experiences directly influenced the music and life choices made by Berlin's improvising musicians, and the following two sections examine how these initial experiences and enthusiasms were capitalised upon, in order to pursue a life or career in Improvised Music - both with and without the help of formal music education.

²³ A small town in Australia.

²⁴ Els Vandeweyer, while on an extended visit to Portugal, recalled spending hours in the *Trem Azul* store, listening to modern jazz, Improvised Music and "John Zorn-related" releases (the shop was closely connected to the record label Cleanfeed), and Klaus Kürvers remembered that his local record shop owners, although not jazz experts, were friendly enough to allow him to go there every week and to listen to records in their telephone-box-like cabins, even if he didn't purchase anything.

7.2 Self-Taught Musicians and Auto-Didacts

As the first part of this chapter has shown, for all of the musicians here, a considerable part of their discovery of and inception into Improvised Music (following initial fortuitous introductions by friends, ‘strange’ people and family) was self-directed - through listening to records, visiting concerts, and reading books or magazines.

As section 7.3 will show, many musicians also received formal music education, however, a quarter of those interviewed here described themselves as entirely ‘self-taught’ (or ‘auto-didactic’). As I will show in the following section, I believe that processes of self-directed research and auto-didactic elements applied, in differing ways and to varying extents, to all of the musicians I interviewed here. However, before proceeding to look at the role of formal music education in the learning of Improvised Music, this section presents portraits of three ‘self-taught’ improvisers - showing the various and often unorthodox ways in which these individuals designed and navigated their own personal educations in Improvised Music-making.

Owing to constrictions of space in this thesis, each of these accounts is highly condensed and none of these musicians’ stories are quite as simple as the versions presented here. I do hope, however, that these examples provide a suitable illustration of the kind of experiences that led to such ‘self-taught’ musicians embarking upon lives and careers as improvising musicians.

Burkhard Beins

Typical of many self-taught musicians, percussionist and electronic musician Burkhard Beins’ musical beginnings were little more than attempts to emulate what he had been hearing in his listening. Beins was a relatively late starter,²⁵ and:

I played in rock sessions, so I had a very cheap drum kit, in order to join the occasional session. [...] We thought it was punk, but it was more blues I guess! [laughs]

I had a lot of sound objects and inside piano,²⁶ and the drum kit... and a reel-to-reel [tape recorder], and I made collages on a simple four-track. [...] I remember taping the erase head of the tape recorder to make overdubs. So I made 4-track tape collage pieces which were inspired by... [Robert] Fripp and [Brian] Eno, tape loops and so on.²⁷

²⁵See p. 133 for more on Beins’ early listening tastes. Beins thought that he didn’t start playing until the age of 25, fellow auto-didacts Clayton Thomas and Chris Heenan also not beginning until their early 20s.

²⁶See footnote, p. 49, for Andrea Neumann’s definition of her ‘inside piano’.

²⁷Beins’ background in creating tape pieces influenced not just his playing, but the electroacoustic areas of his work (evidenced by releases such as *Disco Prova*, *Structural Drift* and *Rhythm Complication*

In his hometown Beins found a willing collaborator, and:

With Michael [Renkel],²⁸ I started to play live, and also to improvise, and we also often used the inside piano, tape loops and... all sorts of instruments. [...] Sometimes we also played concerts where we were using tapes and stuff, but it kind of turned out not to be really satisfying to start and stop tapes, and, at the same time, to manually reproduce sounds. So we were kicking that out, and started to play mostly guitar and percussion with preparations. [...]

Step-by-step we moved on.

As for many growing up in small towns,²⁹ it was only somewhat later that Beins and Renkel came into contact with other improvisers, and:

Then it went pretty fast. We were hooking up with some other people in Hannover... and after one year or so we played a gig... where Günther Christmann invited some young players to join one of his *Vario* projects. There were older players like Paul Lovens, Radu Malfatti, Dietmar Diesner, and also a lot of young players... [such as] Michael Griener and Rudi Mahall...³⁰ there was quite a range and it was very exciting for us.

Yearly visits to the Moers festival throughout the 1980s provided first-hand experience of the Downtown New York scene:

All these people [were] playing in the morning sessions...³¹ improvising for 3 days in different constellations. [...] In the evening they played with their more rocky bands, like Massacre... so it was this huge range, from the more noise improvisation, to the more halfway-rock-song-but-with-a-noisy-edge... and at the same time there was Free Jazz - there was David Murray playing,

and Brass - where duo recordings of Beins and Clayton Thomas were overlaid with solo performances by leading Berlin brass players, before being mixed and edited into a new piece entirely). Early work with multitrack recording was common to Chris Heenan (who used a Tascam 4-track to create “sound collages and little stories”), Valerio Tricoli (who started by overdubbing himself playing “noise stuff” on a “very detuned guitar”) and JD Zazie, who was mixing everything from jazz to techno - “[DJ-ing] was a way of exploring sounds and learning how to mix them together to create a communication between different sound sources. Thanks to the radio experience it got more abstract [and] I started mixing all kinds of music I was interested in, by collaging and layering it.” Heenan began to study ornithology at college before dropping out (he continued with film and philosophy), JD Zazie studied architecture, and Tricoli, cinema.

²⁸Renkel was still one of Beins’ longest-standing musical partners, and they continued to play together in the groups Phosphor and Activity Center. Renkel also lived in Berlin, and ran the label Absinth (where Beins has released CDs) and the venue Quiet Cue.

²⁹The majority of musicians interviewed here were from small- to medium-sized towns, and only very few were from large cities.

³⁰Griener and Mahall were also childhood friends and long-term collaborators, both having found their way from Nürnberg to Berlin.

³¹Beins mentioned John Zorn, guitarist Fred Frith and turntablist Christian Marclay, whereas Arto Lindsay, Mark Ribot and John Lurie were cited by other musicians and listeners. The Moers festival was also an important gateway for Michael Thieke and listener Cristina Marx.

Jack DeJohnette. [...] It was a perfect education.

And, propelling Beins further into the direction of Reductionist improvisation, a London concert by the group *Polwechsel* during the early 1990s also provided valuable impetus:³²

I was living in London in 94-95... and at the LMC³³ festival, *Polwechsel* played, raising strong discussions [laughs]. They split the audience. Some people were really impressed, and other people hated it. Because they played quietly, and used a certain amount of silence. Listening, now, to the first *Polwechsel* CDs from back then, it doesn't sound *that* super-quiet and silent to me. But probably back then it was more than the usual. [...] [It was about] the statement they made there, and the discussions that their concert raised. Like, does this make sense - does it make sense to work towards that area or not? Is it an interesting thing, or just boring? There was some resentment, which was causing an interesting debate.

Following this, during the mid-1990s, Beins moved (via Hamburg) to Berlin, and there he met with the other protagonists, who, having similar questions and interests, were to become the first wave of Berlin Reductionists, and form the beginnings of the Echtzeitmusik scene.³⁴

Olaf Rupp

Contrary to the experience of Beins, whose musical development grew directly in relation to his listening and parallel experimentations with Michael Renkel, the story of guitarist Olaf Rupp offered an alternative and more isolated (or 'naïve')³⁵ route into Improvised Music-making.

Growing up in an even more culturally isolated situation,³⁶ Rupp (arguably one of Berlin's most idiosyncratic improvisers) described his beginnings as follows and, unwittingly, was playing some form of Improvised Music from the very start. For Rupp, for whom record-buying, visiting concerts and locating himself in relation to the existing Improvised Music tradition played little to no part in his early years:³⁷

³²Beins is now a member of *Polwechsel* (see p. 125).

³³London Musicians' Collective.

³⁴See Chapter 2.3 and [Beins et al., 2011b, Nauck, 2005, Blazanovic, 2012].

³⁵I use the term 'naïve' free of any value judgement, and in the sense of Howard Becker: "These artists have usually had no connection with any art world at all. They do not know the members of the ordinary art world in which works like theirs (if such exist) are produced", their works existing independently of the standards, "of any world outside its maker's personal life" [Becker, 2008, 258, 260].

³⁶Rupp is from a small village in Saarland, South West Germany, where, "There was nothing. Only Abba and ugly stuff, in the radio. [...] My parents were into... Reinhard Mey, this German *Liedermacher*... there weren't many influences." Rupp recalls one school teacher exposing him briefly to John Coltrane and Karlheinz Stockhausen, but the meeting had little impact - at the time, the most impressive music available to Rupp was Pink Floyd.

³⁷Rupp described how, "I didn't have the idea it would help me with my playing. [...] If I had to

I started as an *auto-didakt*... I had no teachers... and I started with this improvising. Well, at that time it wasn't like I play now, but it *was* improvised. I didn't want to play any songs or nothing, just [to] pluck the guitar. I found a guitar [...] in the cellar in the house, in some corner, and just played it. And of course, after a while... you find some chords, they sound like the songs on the radio, and other chords don't! [laughs]. But for me it was very much exploring and not following the instructions of a teacher... it's a different approach.

Adding that, "I never dreamed that this my improvisations could be possibly made in public for an audience", he thought that, instead, he should learn some classical guitar,³⁸ and in his pursuit of these studies, the teenage Rupp decided to develop perfect pitch - buying a set of 12 tuning forks that he listened to every day, in the hope that sooner or later he would "get it". The result, however, was not quite as he'd hoped, and he described how this unintentionally came to affect his entire perception of music-making - hearing sound entirely outside of the hierarchical framework proposed by Western classical music:³⁹

After a while I realised, well, it doesn't work... I'm not Mozart, and it won't help me! So it didn't help in *that* way, but it helped me a lot in seeing every note as a different sound. [Even] today, it's very difficult to understand how other people don't hear this!

It was very interesting to develop this way of focusing on the colours of tones, instead of their position in a theoretical hierarchy of the theory of harmony.

The experience of performing a Villa-Lobos piece while in his late teens opened further avenues into non-conventional perceptions of music-making, and, like the tuning fork experience, all of these discoveries came from Rupp's own awareness and 'doing':

Villa-Lobos, he has these studies, they are very monotonous... And in the middle of this piece I realised that my thoughts are totally somewhere else, really far away [laughs]. I was not in this room, I was not thinking about the author, or the audience, or my guitar, or the next difficult moment in the piece. Nothing. I was just dreaming!

And then I was scared, and thought, "Shit! I should watch more about this

decide, will I sit and listen to a record, or will I sit with the guitar... it was the guitar."

³⁸Rupp did have a small amount of classical music education, "When I was 12 I had some private beginners lessons from a friend of my parents for a year or so. And at the age of 20-something I had lessons for a few months from a professional classical guitar teacher, in Stuttgart, whose name I can't remember. So most of it all is self-taught. I went to the public library, and took all [the] paper-music for guitar that I could find there."

³⁹I will expand on such questions of dealing with noise- and sound-based musics, and Improvised Music in general, in Chapter 10.

piece!” And then I watched it, and it was a really short moment of really confident smiling - I was like, “Oh cool, it’s working!”⁴⁰

Emphasising the significance of this experience as a turning point, Rupp continued:

It was like “I don’t want to go *there*”, “I want to go into *this* direction”, where the music comes really from the unconscious. [...] I had no respect for this really controlled playing... *this* and *this* and *this*... I respect it for others, but for me, I don’t want to go there.

And, as well as continuing his independent classical studies, Rupp also started a rock/blues band (“this kind of stuff which you do when you’re 16”).

Unlike Beins’ work with Renkel, however, Rupp’s Improvised Music-making continued in considerable isolation, and free of the knowledge that there even was an Improvised Music tradition, until much later, when he moved to the larger town of Saarbrücken.⁴¹ There, he was fortunate enough to start a (“sort-of”) hard rock band with Stephan Matthieu and Hanno Leichtmann (with whom he later moved to Berlin),⁴² and:

The funny thing with this band was that... I never really had a written score, or a really fixed concept for every song - we had the chords, of course, and I knew the melody and the character, but I played something different every time we played the songs.

Following the move to Berlin, and the bass player leaving the band, the improvised elements increased, generating, “something which I really almost miss today... improvised hardcore music”, and this move (in 1993) brought Rupp into contact with the label FMP (where he recorded 5 records), as well as putting him in touch with the other founder members of the Echtzeitmusik scene - collaborating, to this day, with musicians from both camps.⁴³

⁴⁰ Although he did not draw the connection directly here, it is perhaps worth pointing out that Rupp has practiced meditation and Zen Buddhism since the age of 16.

⁴¹ The experience of developing (something like) Improvised Music in isolation was common to others, including Steve Heather (“through just playing, just jamming with guys, we were improvising... but when people talked about it I didn’t make the connection of the word and what was happening - I was just doing it”) and the host of the anonymous salon (see footnote, p. 94), who described his first contacts to the scene as follows: “I have learnt classical music on the piano, and at one point in my life, I don’t know, about fifteen years ago, I thought maybe to find your own style in music, a sort of free music that comes out of your heart... to hit as much notes as you can, and leave out notes, with time, which you don’t like. And it’s not you who does it, but the fingers who do it, and then music appears. Like born out of itself... Then all of a sudden in [the salon], there started to be musicians, and they did that music that was my invention! [laughs]. And I was quite astonished that it existed in such a wide range.”

⁴² A local musician, by the name of Henk Nuwenout, was also an important influence (“a really funny guy... [who] played bass, saxophone and drums... really strange, weird, free sound stuff”).

⁴³ See p. 120.

Clayton Thomas

Like Beins, Clayton Thomas' initial fascination with Improvised Music came through record collecting, as well as a jazz radio show he started to present, aged 17.⁴⁴ Also primarily self-taught as a performer, however, his subsequent route into Improvised Music was different again - inspired by experiences much further away from home, the political and social aspects of contemporary American Free Jazz, and the assistance of older mentors, who took Thomas under their wing and helped him to shape his progress through playing, discussing and 'doing'.

For Thomas, who was previously working in an advertising agency in his native Australia,⁴⁵ the 'eureka' moment came with a visit to New York around the year 2000 and, aged 23 or 24, the young bassist was attracted just as much by the social and political aspects of the Improvised Music world as by the power of the music - subsequently receiving a tailored education in the city's clubs and bars from some of the music's finest exponents:

The second night I was there I got very close with a small clique of... very political free jazz people... like Andy Bemkey (who was a piano player who was playing with Reggie Workman, and Billy Bang) and William Parker. [...] [They were] very into the New York Free Jazz tradition and the jazz tradition, [and] they could see that I was fucking like "Yeah, let's go see *everything*", so we went to see three gigs a night. [...] I hadn't started playing bass then.⁴⁶

This led to Thomas returning to New York for several extended visits, during which time he lived with five other musicians (hanging out, talking and playing) and developing his own musicianship directly in relation to his listening experiences:

We'd basically get up at 5 in the afternoon, practice for three hours, go to three concerts, get the bass at about 2 in the morning, and then practice until 6 or so. [...] That was my life in New York... maybe 4 times [of] 3 months [at a time].

And this baptism-by-fire led to a situation where:

I started playing gigs before I could play the bass... I was playing gigs in quite serious situations, or at least ones I took very seriously, with very very good musicians, before I fucking knew how to play C major!⁴⁷

⁴⁴See p. 138.

⁴⁵Where he'd also worked his way up, leaving school at age 17, and without university education.

⁴⁶See also p. 136. Thomas also cited Margaret Davis (the wife of bassist Henry Grimes) as a significant help and influence (Davis ran a pre-internet newsletter and, "she would go to every gig, and hand out a huge pamphlet of all the creative music").

⁴⁷Almost entirely in reverse to conventional models of musical education, years later, Thomas spent a 3-month residency in Paris working every day on scales, rhythm and intonation exercises from the

Back at home, however, things were somewhat harder, and the local (more traditional) jazz and Improvised Music communities were slow to accept him, in spite of his recent international experiences. Talking of one of his first recordings:

It caused a kind of furore... and it threw me into a situation, because... I was playing with one of the best young saxophone players in Sydney, and it was on... ABC radio, [the] national broadcaster... [and] people were like “You can’t fucking play, fuck you.”

Yet, undeterred, Thomas set about organising his own concert series and festival,⁴⁸ and made contact to three of Australia’s most well-known improvisers - Jim Denley, Chris Abrahams and Tony Buck (who, in the words of Thomas, “is a god in Australia”).⁴⁹ Thomas was playing with Buck one year after starting the bass, and the drummer, doubtless spotting Thomas’ potential, became a friend and mentor - “calling” Thomas on aspects of his playing, and providing something of an informal education in the process:

Tony and I had this very symbiotic musical relationship from the first second we started playing, and it didn’t matter whether I could play or not. [...] I did a tour with Tony and Johannes [Bauer], which is the most free and liberated band in the world, [and] I just played the same thing every night. [...] I didn’t realise it, and Tony fucking called me on it, on the last gig. He was like, “What are you doing?! You know, it’s like you’re playing the Clayton Thomas repertoire”, and it was like, “Fuck, yeah, I am...”. So that kicked my arse out of that.

Buck also helped Thomas to tour Europe for the first time,⁵⁰ and through this, the bassist began to make connections to the European scene - having already played with Axel Dörner, Alexander von Schlippenbach and Johannes Bauer by the time he moved to the city some 6 years later. Just like in New York, on his arrival in Berlin, Thomas was playing “3 [jam] sessions a day and a gig nearly every night”, and this led to him being one of the busiest and most successful musicians in the scene - co-founding the Splitter Orchestra in 2010,⁵¹ and even attracting attention in the mainstream press [Sickert, 2007].

Simandl method book - in his own words, “Really like the shit I should have done if I went to music school.”

⁴⁸‘the NOW Now’ festival, which came with the tag, “If you like Improvised Music, we like you” (Thomas told me that, “By the 6th year of the festival we had 500 people coming”).

⁴⁹Buck and Abrahams, aside from their work in the Improvised Music scene, are most famous for their work with internationally renowned jazz/experimental/improvisation group *The Necks*.

⁵⁰Thomas thought Buck was already living in Berlin by the point they met, or was at least in Amsterdam, the drummer’s previous home.

⁵¹Splitter Orchestra was co-founded by Thomas, harpist/guzheng player Clare Cooper, and Ausland organiser Gregor Hotz (see footnote, p. 100).

7.3 Formal Musical Education

The three portraits outlined in Section 7.2 serve not just to show the experience and ideologies of many of Berlin's self-taught improvisers, but, in addition, point towards many of the learning processes referred to by musicians who were also formally educated.

For such 'trained' performers, the same experiences and processes of informal listening, concert attendance, jamming, mentorship and, above all, independent work and research almost always ran parallel to their 'official' training, and, other than for those with 'special teachers',⁵² their conventional education usually had little to do with their development as improvisers.

Some self-taught musicians appeared almost entirely opposed to formal music education,⁵³ however between one third and one half of Berlin's improvising musicians had been involved in higher level music education, and 75% of those interviewed had received some form of institutionalised musical/instrumental tuition at one time or another.

Improvisers had commonly studied either Jazz or Classical Music at conservatoire or university, and most of those who went on to study at this level had received classical music tuition as teenagers. It was more common for younger musicians to have received and completed university/conservatoire-level training.⁵⁴

While some were lucky to have attended more 'open-minded' courses (covering Improvised Music history and practice as part of the curriculum),⁵⁵ for practically all the 'trained' musicians interviewed here, their 'official' study was complemented by other informal and self-directed experiences - Tobias Delius emphasising the importance of playing every night in Mexico and visiting Amsterdam's clubs (in relation to his study at Sweelinck Conservatorium),⁵⁶ Michael Thieke recalling how his jazz training

⁵²See p. 150.

⁵³See p. 50.

⁵⁴As internationally, jazz tuition at university/conservatoire level was not widely available in Germany until the 1980s, where the *Folkwang-Hochschule* in Essen was, "The first institute to offer a degree course in jazz music that was not geared to becoming a teacher, but becoming a professional artist" [Herborn, 2009]. At the time of writing, there was no university/conservatory-level course in Berlin (or Germany) dedicated to Improvised Music studies, and no qualification was available in this area. The Exploratorium provided regular informal workshops, however these were not referenced in the development of the musicians interviewed here, and workshops were rarely carried out by musicians active in the local scene. This aside, Tristan Honsinger's twice-yearly 3-day workshops in Sowieso and the Neue Musikschule Berlin's occasional workshops (with musicians including Axel Dörner) were the only public access points to more formalised Improvised Music education (both of these possibilities were relatively recent developments).

⁵⁵Tobias Delius pointed to the 'Improvising Musician' department at Sweelinck Conservatorium in Amsterdam, and Steve Heather to the "improvised-music-slash-jazz" course at Australia's Victorian College of the Arts.

⁵⁶See p. 135 for more on Mexico. Delius said of Sweelinck that, "Among the fellow students there was a lot of nice playing happening, but also I immediately went out... Charli Green, the trumpet [teacher],

at the *HdK* was counterpointed by hanging out in 1990s Prenzlauer Berg/Mitte squats (listening to the Echtzeitmusik-scene's first forays into reductionism),⁵⁷ and Biliana Voutchkova complemented her study at Mannes College of Music and Boston's New England Conservatory with nights out in downtown New York - visiting clubs including Tonic and the Knitting Factory.⁵⁸

Many pointed to their studies for technical elements that they still used in their improvised practices, Hannes Lingens grateful to his jazz education for teaching him to "hold the sticks properly",⁵⁹ Michael Thieke praising American saxophonist Denney Goodhew for offering him "the very basics of breathing and sound production",⁶⁰ and Anna Kaluza, who studied jazz in Köln⁶¹ (before undertaking a masters at a prominent London conservatoire), finding her conventional jazz training invaluable for "a kind of applied ear training", as well as for the ability "to feel at home in all the keys".⁶² Els Vandeweyer and Biliana Voutchkova (an exception here, in that she still performed in the Neue Musik world) also attributed their conservatoire-level classical educations to introducing them to a range of contemporary classical music (including the composers Gubaidulina, Ligeti, Kurtág, Messiaen and Xenakis).

Whether in classical or jazz education, however, traditional, impersonal or 'rote' teaching methods bored and frustrated practically all of the musicians interviewed in this study, and most were critical of teachers with no interest in modern or Improvised Music, and who they considered to be 'old-fashioned'. Their interests and passions were encouraged, if they were lucky, only on an extra-curricular basis, while others felt compelled to drop out of, or otherwise reject, their formal music education entirely.

he would take us to the jam sessions and we would talk shit... it felt like a big mix - both with my peers, but also with older [musicians] - I met Misha [Mengelberg] quite quickly, Han [Bennink] quite quickly... [bassist] Arjen Gorter was very helpful. Sean [Bergin] [*one of Delius' best friends and most frequent collaborators until his death in 2012*] I met on the second day I was in Amsterdam." Delius, however, left the school after 18 months, "I wasn't interested so much in what the school had to offer - I was more interested in what was going on generally. And I was learning more from them than what I felt I was learning at school."

⁵⁷*HdK* stands for *Hochschule der Künste* (University of the Arts), now *UdK (Universität der Künste)*. One of Thieke's co-students at the *HdK* was Hanno Leichtmann, at the time, a collaborator of Olaf Rupp (see p. 143).

⁵⁸Voutchkova described seeing Pauline Oliveros at the Knitting Factory for the first time, "I heard Pauline Oliveros play very early. A time when again, I had absolutely no clue about what this was, and I just looked at her and I thought 'My god! What a woman, what's going on?!! What *is* that?!'. [...] Then I started slowly going here, or there." Several musicians, including Clayton Thomas and Arthur Rother, had spent extended stretches in New York (see p. 144 for more on Thomas' time there).

⁵⁹Lingens studied jazz in Dresden, but attributed just as much responsibility to the weekly *Freitagsmusik* workshop in Hamburg's *Linken Laden*, which he already visited as a teenager - "I think every second Friday was a concert, and every Friday afternoon they would just meet and play... not even [just] Free Jazz... [but] Free Improvised Music of all kinds."

⁶⁰Thieke went on, "He was this very open minded guy, even though he was a very different player... a Cannonball-Adderley-head!"

⁶¹With now-Berlin-resident reeds player Frank Gratkowski (see p. 80).

⁶²Kaluza supplemented her London conservatoire education by playing in sessions and concerts organised by the London Improviser's Orchestra (a large ensemble frequented by prominent British improvisers, including Steve Beresford and Evan Parker).

The remainder of this chapter explores these themes, and the effect that these experiences had on improvising musicians' musical lives.

Criticisms of Traditional Teaching Methods

Before his time in Mexico, Tobias Delius described his teenage musical upbringing as the standard school clarinet instruction of the “good old-fashioned socialistic school system that used to be in England, a free pint of milk and all that stuff!” - recounting that instead of practising, and unmotivated by scales and études, he made a cassette recording of himself playing and hid in his bedroom, reading comic books while the tape played on.⁶³

Antonio Borghini reflected on his time at conservatoire, studying with an orchestral bass teacher, where:

I didn't finish, I was there like four years and then I just had to fucking stop it... because my teacher was a dick. [...] Now I realise that I really love that music, and I still practice it... [but] the main thing was this kind of struggle between me and him... he was checking my fingers [for blisters, to see] if I was playing jazz, [and] the first thing he told me [was], “Just remember, nothing happened in the twentieth century, so we won't even discuss about it”. [...] You know, you can get such characters in Italy.

And Rudi Mahall, somewhat more motivated, had been set for a career as a professional classical clarinetist, had it not been for the following turn of events:

I did an audition... and then [they] called me... and said “You're in”. Super. Because I played really well. Stravinsky, the solo piece. [...] And then I had a theoretical exam, and there I allowed myself a couple of things that you're not allowed to write in there. [laughs] [...]

They asked me what BWV meant, in Bach's work, and I wrote *Bayerische Motoren Werke*!⁶⁴ Because the teacher said to me already that nothing could happen, I was already in... so I may as well have some fun! And somehow, the director of the Conservatorium [*sic*] got his hands on it, and said “Him? No.” [laughs] [...]

They refused me. [...] And then I thought, if they don't want me, then I don't want them either. They can kiss my ass. And it doesn't interest me anyway, this shitty music, this shitty classical music. [...] And then I went out, and bought a bass clarinet. I marched into the shop, bought the bass clarinet, and since then I didn't have anything more to do with classical

⁶³Needless to say one day his secret was revealed.

⁶⁴The car company, BMW.

music. From one day to the next I stopped practising... It wasn't about that any more.

For many, their experience of Jazz education was little better, with few courses offering or endorsing the study of Improvised Music or even Free Jazz - and again, except for those with sympathetic teachers, these interests were forced to run in parallel with their formal studies. For Mike Majkowski, jazz school was centred around "straight ahead standards" (meeting after class with a select group of friends to play the music of Ornette Coleman and Eric Dolphy, or to "try improvising in a free sense"), and many musicians criticised what they perceived as old-fashioned, 'rote', impersonal and over-standardised (institutional) teaching methods.⁶⁵

Anna Kaluza said of her teacher, at one of London's most famous conservatoires, that:

[It] was quite disappointing... in the beginning it was completely anonymous... [and] I had to do his programme, like everyone. [He] didn't ask a single question, it was just "Hello. Here's the first exercise." It was all these horrible Berklee exercises, I thought "My god! I hope I won't play like this afterwards." Through all the keys... mathematical... even when I practised I could hear in the next cabin there was another student... playing the same stuff. I think it is a kind of danger to really end up playing these licks.

And this opinion tallied with that of Christian Lillinger, who studied in Dresden,⁶⁶ despite having played with the *crème-de-la-crème* of the (post-)East German Free Jazz scene as a teenager:⁶⁷

In Universities, there are developments that are only going backwards. There are ever-more musicians being educated, and ever-more superficially - it's just about copying and being 'professional'. And functioning. And they think actually that art just comes from craftsmanship or skill [*Können*]... that's a catastrophe, a catastrophe actually. Art doesn't just come from

⁶⁵Tobias Delius also told me how the Improvising Musician department at Sweelinck changed with time, "[When I studied there] it was very different to a lot of the conventional jazz teaching... [and] a tiny school. [...] But a few years later it changed - many more students came, and they were much more interested in "tell us what to do". [...] Before that students came and were arguing with their teachers - the teacher was saying "Let's play this", and the students were like "I don't wanna play that - that's old-fashioned shit!"

⁶⁶Lillinger studied at the *Hochschule für Musik Carl Maria von Weber* unusually early, from the age of 16-20. It was regularly publicised that Lillinger was taught there by Günter "Baby" Sommer (one of East Germany's most famous Free Jazz drummers), yet Lillinger was quick to decry this myth, "I never really studied with Baby Sommer... I had lessons from Michael Griener, I learnt lots... Baby Sommer once took me to New York, when he played at the Vision festival. I was 17 or 18 and it was super... But together it was just one or two hours, where Baby Sommer played his music to me." When I pointed out that I'd repeatedly read the opposite, Lillinger replied, "That's the media. [...] The media always write that."

⁶⁷Born in 1984, the Berlin wall was long down by the time Lillinger was active as a professional musician.

craftsmanship or skill alone... it has to be authentic, or otherwise it makes no sense... I can't copy. I can't do it. Never.

Positive Stories and 'Special' Teachers

As a result of these institutional problems and deficits, many musicians looked outside of the conservatoire for practical experience of Improvised Music - drawing on the sources and experiences already described in sections 7.1 and 7.2, as well as undertaking private tuition from professional jazz musicians and improvisers. Axel Dörner, grateful for the technical expertise of his classical teachers, was equally thankful for private lessons with jazz trumpeter John Eardly,⁶⁸ Andrea Neumann took piano lessons with improviser/jazz musician Aki Takase to supplement her classical studies at the *Hochschule der Künste*,⁶⁹ and Chris Heenan, initially self-taught, later sought private lessons from well-known Chicago saxophonist Ken Vandermark.

For others, however, formal education was a more inspiring environment, and did provide assistance with their Improvised Music activities - such positive experiences generally being built around relatively unconventional teachers, whose maverick educational styles encouraged more inventive approaches to music-making than the curriculum otherwise allowed.

Just as for those, in the previous section, who had rejected their classical educations, for Tristan Honsinger (who studied at the New England Conservatory in Boston), conservatoire was generally a disappointing experience,⁷⁰ but one lasting memory did come from this period, itself something of a gateway to Improvised Music-making.⁷¹

The director was an improviser as well as a very competent violinist, and once he put a score of a Webern string trio in front of us and we couldn't read it. And he said, "OK, forget about it, and pretend you're reading it". And so we did that.

⁶⁸Dörner's classical teachers included renowned trumpet teacher and embouchure expert Malte Burba, who had helped him with several traumatic embouchure changes. Living in Germany, Eardly had most famously replaced Chet Baker in Gerry Mulligan's quartet. Dörner had also studied classical piano in Arnhem (Holland) and jazz piano in Köln.

⁶⁹She eventually decided that, after 3-or-so years of transcribing solos and listening to jazz, that, "this jazz language was too far away from me. I was never feeling laid back and groovy enough, and then I discovered the Improvised Music scene more, and I had this impression that it's more my language."

⁷⁰Honsinger added, "I auditioned with a man that I really liked, and he liked me, and he said, 'Come and study with me', and I got a scholarship and what have you. But then he went on sabbatical... and then I got put in the charge of an old man that played in the symphony orchestra, and that's when I started having doubts about what I was doing here in the first place. And then I left that school and went to another school, and at the end of that year I quit."

⁷¹In this sense, Honsinger, like Voutchkova, was also an important exception to the two streams of jazz and experimental rock music described in Chapter 7.1.

Just like Rupp's somewhat unknowing introduction to Improvised Music,⁷² "that was actually the first experience of improvisation, but it didn't go in back then", and Honsinger continued that:

He was a [Jewish] Romanian musician who came over in the war... and a lot of contemporary composers wrote for him, [involving] improvisation in the pieces. [...] And he was one of the people they asked to perform their pieces, because in that time there wasn't many that could do it, and of course he could improvise, because of the Gypsy tradition.

Also in Europe, Eastern European teachers were not uncommon, and their more unconventional styles of teaching, reliance on ear-training and improvisation, as well as their own poly-musicality, set the tone for several improvising-musicians-to-be.

Michael Thieke's teacher, from the age of 10, was a Hungarian who'd settled in the small German town of Neuss (classically trained, but who played jazz and his own particular brand of Balkan-jazz fusion), and for Thieke, as a result:

When I started first listening to jazz, [it was] directly not to mainstream jazz, but to some other stuff. [...] From the first moment on [he would say], "Don't play these phrases - stop it - invent your own!" [...] Sometimes, thinking back now I think it was not good in some ways also, because I never learnt the basics [laughs],⁷³ but from the first moment, thinking about this, and listening to this stuff, I had already somebody pointing me towards something particular, not to be like the others.

For Tobias Delius, a "completely crazy Czech" running a local big band provided a colourful counterpoint to his less-than-inspiring school music education,⁷⁴ introducing him to improvisation at the age of 14 or 15. And prior to Rudi Mahall's unfortunate run-in with the conservatoire,⁷⁵ his Romanian clarinet teacher's eccentric approach to classical music had doubtless influenced his ability to improvise, as well as his later means of learning and practising (which was to play along to records of the jazz masters):⁷⁶

My first teacher [Mahall was aged 10] in the music school was a super teacher. He didn't say at all how to blow into the clarinet, all of that was obvious. He just played piano the whole time, and from the beginning he just put really difficult music in front of me - Spohr and Weber, or Stamitz. And so already after one year, I was playing Spohr, and just up and over, fast, and I just played behind him... that's how I learnt music. And that it was fun. And

⁷²See p. 143.

⁷³Cf. Clayton Thomas' story, p. 144.

⁷⁴See p. 148.

⁷⁵See p. 148.

⁷⁶See p. 177.

that classical music could also be fun if you don't take it so seriously. He was cool with everything. Actually I could just play what I wanted [laughs] And he always [*sings fast classical piano music*] and me [*with a big smile, jolly, descending*] "perr, pe perr perr perr..."!⁷⁷

Such special characters were by no means all Eastern European, Matthias Müller receiving a fortuitous introduction to jazz through a local trombonist who, by chance, visited the village *Posaunenchor* looking for new students,⁷⁸ and Biliana Voutchkova's time at Bostons' New England Conservatory (some 25-30 years later than Honsinger) led to her discovery of Improvised Music through saxophonist Joe Maneri, who was teaching a class "connected to microtonal music and improvisation".

For Voutchkova, as for all here, the beauty of this class was the possibility to develop a personal approach to music-making, and for her:

It was [always] completely full, and he always let people just play... it was much more connected to, "Come, and let's see how we make it that you really find your own voice, and are really able to bring it out to the surface."

Adding, somewhat tellingly, that:

I think with improvisation, even until today, it just takes doing it. You just have to do it.

⁷⁷Parallel to this, by the age of 15, in his hometown of Nürnberg, Mahall had already begun improvising with drummer Michael Griener (see footnote, p. 140), "He was 14, I was 15... his father had a pub, and underneath there was a cellar that we could always use. We played every day - 'screech screech!', already wrote pieces, and organised bands... I just practised classical music, and just met [with Griener] and improvised freely. [...] I screeched and squealed, and made some noises. And at the time, the biggest influence was actually Evan Parker... Derek Bailey, and [Anthony] Braxton, because they weren't working so much with notes, more with noises, and that was easier to imitate."

⁷⁸Later, two "open minded" teachers at the *Folkwang Hochschule* in Essen (Henning Berg and Peter Hermann) opened his ears to John Coltrane, Ornette Coleman and other forms of Improvised Music.

Chapter 8

Making Music and Defining Improvisation: Materials and Personal Work

Having now provided a background to the current state of the Berlin Improvised Music scene, the musical lives of its performers, and their various routes into Improvised Music, the following chapters turn to more practical aspects of improvisation and performance - examining conventions of production and consumption, and proposing a range of possible answers to the fundamental questions asked in Chapter 3.

In this chapter, I will establish the need to distinguish between personal and group elements of performance (using findings from interviews to propose a grounded theory of improvisational practice, and a working definition of the term ‘improvisation’),¹ before examining the personal/individual elements of Improvised Music-making in terms of each performers’ musical materials (their selection, evolution, flexibility and variety) and the various practise methods that led to improvisational mastery. Finally, I will deal with two important exceptions to this model - musicians who didn’t practice at all (preferring to develop their materials during performance), and the idea of ‘controlled-discontrol’ (where musicians deliberately lost control, and discovered new materials whilst playing).

¹This definition will be specific to the Improvised Music field.

8.1 What is Improvised Music? Individual Materials and Group Interactions

In looking at the mechanics of Improvised Music practice and referring back to the findings from Improvisation Studies presented in Chapter 3,² the immediate questions that presented themselves to me were, what does the term ‘Improvisation’ mean in this context; what are the processes, underlying structures and conventions that allow for collaboration and collective music-making; and how ‘improvised’ *is* Improvised Music?

As already suggested in Chapter 3, and borne out in several interviews, romantic views of improvisation as ‘genius’, divine inspiration or consisting solely of materials generated during performance were rare,³ and most musicians immediately (and openly) offered practical and unromantic accounts of their craft, emphasising that the unknown elements of Improvised Music practice were predominantly on the group, and not the individual level.

Michael Thieke explained how:

[The word] improvisation means something very different [here]... [The way] people usually use it is to do something ‘out of the blue’ and reacting to some very new situation and then hav[ing] to deal with it somehow and improvise what you do. But I think what improvised [*sic*] musicians do is the opposite - they have their material prepared, and they use it maybe in a spontaneous way. It’s not pre-decided - they take the decision in the moment, but it’s very much a process that has a lot of work already done before the concert, [just] as a composer does.

Andrea Neumann added that:

There are not really *so* many free elements, [so much] free space. But on the other hand, something is created which... nobody had an exact plan about, because of this *rencontre* of the musicians. [...]

When you play together, in this frame of improvisation... you act in a way you did not know before that you would act... you’re also surprised... the open space can create a certain energy and enjoyment in all of the musicians to create something in the moment that is not predictable.

It’s not that you don’t know what your instrument will do - it’s about how you act and react with the other people that’s the interesting point. It’s not to go in an area in the instrument that’s completely new - this *can* happen,

²See p. 55.

³Although as I will show, beginning on p. 179, the latter does play some part in Improvised Music practice.

and it can be fine, or not fine, but I think this is not the thing I'm aiming for. [...] It's more about the construction with the other musicians... finding out the new thing between the other musician and me - the challenge for *us*.

Neumann explained further that:

Every one of the musicians has their developed sound vocabulary... they have their instrument, and on that instrument, they discovered a lot of vocabulary, like a language.⁴ And then, on the other hand, they also developed a way of working with those elements... the sounds itself [*sic*], which are also a sort of compositional element, and the way how to work with that.

Burkhard Beins agreed:

You can probably say there's an individual repertoire... [or] a range of musical material [that] you're using or exploring with a certain continuity... as an individual. Probably [to describe it as] an 'individual language' is too much, but let's leave it there - a repertoire of musical material, or range of individual musical material. But then it's really about putting this *fundus*... this range of material... into different musical contexts.

In accordance with Pressing's suggestions of feedback and feedforward,⁵ Beins added that reference to previous experiences considerably influenced which of these materials he drew on in any given moment. And, pointing to the trust that these experiences provided and the importance of such awareness, he suggested that on the group level too, and especially in the case of long-running ensembles, musicians rarely started with an entirely blank canvas:⁶

When it comes to interactive musical group processes it's evident that the decision making has to be left mostly to the moment of playing. But in the case of long-established groups, this interaction and decision-making in the moment is based on, and is largely informed by, a shared group experience and history - a marked territory the group already moves within, [and] a differentiated set of alternating expectations.

Clear choices in materials were also important from the point of view of creating musical focus and meaning, and, as Klaus Kürvers explained:

Which elements you're working with from this diversity, [from] this unfathomable immensity of all possibilities... you have to pick some out, to use as building blocks that you build something from so that it's not

⁴The terms 'language' and 'vocabulary' are used metaphorically and loosely by participants (and by me, throughout this thesis), avoiding the problematic musicological debate into the possibility of a direct correlation between music and linguistics.

⁵See p. 71.

⁶See p. 186 for more on trust, awareness, the 'Field', the (relative) impossibility starting entirely from nothing, and other conventions of group music-making.

completely random... [...] An improviser should work to develop his own language, that contains a vocabulary, that at the beginning is relatively limited... and one should work to make this flexible, so that this vocabulary is always getting bigger, so that your expressive possibilities are always getting bigger, and so that you can manipulate these small patterns, that they become flexible, and so that they can become assimilated into different situations.

Accordingly, most musicians concurred that they had something of a ‘stock’ of musical phrases (or ‘licks’), sounds, noises and extended techniques,⁷ and most were comfortable with the fact that these materials would be repeated between both different groups, and performances. Explaining that on an individual level, his own practice was far from new each time, and that this was actually not something that most musicians were aiming for, Jan Roder explained that:

Of course you learn to know everybody has patterns and things where he repeats himself and so on, and you kind of see “Oh, aha, ok” - he repeats that, but he tries not to repeat it - [he] puts it different[ly], if it’s in the same set. Something like that... of course you cannot invent everything new all the time.

And Rudi Mahall described how, even though it occasionally irritated him:

You can say that I don’t improvise at all. It’s always the same thing. And whether I’m playing with Axel Dörner or Tom Arthurs, I always sound the same... You *could* say that. But that’s just as untrue as if I would say “It’s totally different with Tom Arthurs”! That’s also not true. [...]

Like most things in life, it’s so mundane... I have my licks, and I play them. Like any normal jazz musician I have my licks that I can’t stand [laughs]. And really there’s some recordings of me that I can’t listen to because of that. Terrible! I hear it the whole day long and it’s always the same... whether I play standards, or totally free.

Just like Neumann and Beins, Mahall emphasised the importance of surprise and freshness on the collective level, stating that:

So many of the best things that have ever happened in music would never have happened alone, always with other people. [...] You can play solo until you become blue in the face... or until you become insane, but you’ll never get to the same point that you do when someone else is doing something else at the same time. That’s the thing.

And he continued, more specifically, that:

⁷This was also synonymous with what constituted and defined their musical voice (or voices).

I'm a fan of coincidences. For me, coincidences are something divine... you do something, and it's totally out of your control but suddenly something really great happens. Just like when we come out on playing the same note. That's really the finest. Or sometimes everything goes [silent] - the dynamics go right down suddenly, just like it was written down. [...] That's the best, when a free improvisation suddenly sounds like a composition.

8.2 Individual Work: Use, Acquisition and Quality of Materials

Having now identified the use of a ‘stock’ of individual musical materials (which are then employed in a group context), this section looks deeper into the nature and acquisition of these materials, the qualities that constitute a ‘good’ set of materials, and examines how these materials are practised, developed and maintained.

As I already showed in Chapter 7, most musicians were inspired to take up Improvised Music as a result of their listening experiences (whether live, on radio, or on record),⁸ and this extracurricular or self-taught learning (that led to each musician defining their tastes) also provided important foundations in choosing initial materials for improvisation - early attempts at performance often emulating the phrasing, sounds and techniques of older and more experienced musicians, and this leading, with time, to the creation of an individual ‘voice’ or ‘voices’.

Chris Heenan referenced English saxophonist Evan Parker’s assertion that “my roots are in my record player”⁹ and, just like Clayton Thomas’ “spiderweb” approach to record buying,¹⁰ such experiences directly influenced musicians’ first steps - these choices, as Thomas described, manifesting direct expressions of taste and identity.¹¹

Many mentioned a similar pool of influences, from Cecil Taylor and the Art Ensemble of Chicago, through Frank Zappa and Pink Floyd, to Morton Feldman and John Cage, and Rudi Mahall explained how, despite this common ground, different musicians reached different conclusions. Comparing himself to fellow reedsman Frank Gratkowski:

Everybody just brings the things that he likes the most. Gratkowski maybe likes Braxton a lot, whereas I also like Braxton, but maybe I prefer Paul Desmond. But I can’t say I prefer it, but more that, in a certain way, it touches me more. And that in me, Paul Desmond just strikes a chord with something different. [...] Everybody understands it differently.

He added that:

Everyone has their own [things] that they like or don’t like, and that’s the strength of the music, that in spite of this, you can still make something together. You can make great music together even though you’re completely different.

And, as time went by, each musician’s materials became more personal, this development

⁸Isolated cases such as Olaf Rupp excepted (see p. 141).

⁹See [Corbett, 1994, 193]. Heenan added, “I would definitely say that would apply to me, but it would be CD player.”

¹⁰See p. 138.

¹¹See footnote, p. 190 for a minority of exceptions to this rule.

occurring as an ever-evolving dialogue between recordings and concerts, and practise and performance - with the social element of group work providing important inspiration for the development of new sounds, phrases and techniques.

Jan Roder told me that, whilst performing:

If I recognise there is a problem, then [when I practise] I try to build something around it a little bit, to have that open, to more-and-more be able to be spontaneously able to play what I want.

And Andrea Neumann described that one aim of her private practise was “To look after some things I want to hear”, adding that:

I found this piece by [the composer] George Brecht, *Incidental Music Part 2*... you have to build a tower on the strings of a piano until the tower breaks down. [...] I wanted to combine it with the possibilities of my inside piano,¹² and so I built this tower, all my mikes are closed, and then in the moment where the tower falls, then I open all my channels, so there is quite a big [sound], and I put... two guitar pickups, on the strings, so that when I take off all these little elements of the tower... the strings start more and more to vibrate, and there starts to be feedback between the vibrating strings and the pickup. [...] I combine it also with some mixing desk... sounds, and there is a sort of drone that is *vivant* - full of life - because it's not steady, it's not completely static, it's moving. [...] I think it would be there forever... because I think the pickups, they are also like an amplifier, so what the strings do comes back from the pickup, and that again [vibrates] the strings, which again feeds the pickup to bring out again the sound... this is not-ending feedback. [...]

Now I have to find out, when I have these vibrating sounds... [if] I prepare the strings more... [if] maybe it gets even more intense and massive. I've heard something that I like a lot by [composer] Phill Niblock, *Pan Fried*. It's a piece for piano... it's cool, really cool. [I] heard this, and then I thought I want to try something which can be a little bit like that.

For Neumann, social feedback whilst performing influenced not just her choice of materials, but her choice of instrument, and she explained that, prior to the invention of the 'inside piano', as a conventional pianist:

Other people had this possibility to have these sustained notes, and I just had this 'Pling!' and then my tone was over. [...] I was also looking to having sustained notes.

Adding that her instrument's development also came from the practical concern of

¹²See p. 49 for more on Neumann's inside piano.

wanting to perform in Berlin's 1990s squats, where there was often no piano:

This was also one of the reasons to take out the piano frame out of the piano, to have an instrument of my own so that I could go to the session. Even the development of the instrument has to do with a social aspect in a way.

Just as Rudi Mahall pointed out that the meaning of materials changed between different social/group constellations (even if some elements stayed the same),¹³ Burkhard Beins noted how playing with different groups helped him to develop and understand his relationship with his own repertoire:

With a similar material, like let's say, rubbing two stones together and amplifying it on the drum head...¹⁴ doing it in Activity Center in a certain moment and doing it in Perlone in a certain moment is very different, because the context is so different. But doing it *there* and then *there*, and then another time with *this* group again, I'm learning a lot about what is possible with this specific material. And then I'm doing it in a third group which is again totally different, like in *Polwechsel*, where we possibly pre-compose and fix certain parts. [...]

If it's... a Martin Brandlmayr composition, he knows and recognises this material that I'm doing in improvisation, then he composes a piece where he says like "At this point I want you rubbing the stones in *this* kind of way", but he puts this into a context I would never do in that way in an improvisation. [...] Through this I'm learning what, even more, is possible with this specific material, and I never would have explored it on my own. So it's interesting for me that he's putting it into a different context.

And this inspection of the social influence on improvisers' materials also requires a note from the point of view of electronic and Neue Musik performers, who were a particularly important influence on the Echtzeitmusik-related, Reductionist and post-Reductionist improvising communities of mid-1990s Berlin.

The Social Influence of Electronic Music and Neue Musik

As already shown on p. 122, Axel Dörner's development of pitchless, noise-based material for the trumpet was heavily inspired by *musique concrète* (as well as other electronic music), and this influence was felt extensively throughout Berlin's mid-1990s Echtzeitmusik/(Post-)Reductionist community - the need to develop new materials emerging not just from recordings and concert attendance, but also from attempts to collaborate with musicians using electronic instruments, or with backgrounds (or parallel practices) in Neue Musik.

¹³See p. 156.

¹⁴One of Beins' most idiosyncratic techniques, see Hannes Lingens' reference on p. 118.

Andrea Neumann remembered the influence of electronic musicians from all kinds of backgrounds during this period, and this led to numerous instrumental and technical advances in the form of new instruments, but also in the use of extended techniques on existing ones:

When the first laptop player came into the scene... they had this [*sings something like a high sine wave*] and then there were instrumentalists who wanted to sound like this too. [...]

Ignaz [Schick]... had this phase where he played minidisc. Andrea Ermke, she played minidisc. And also [Christian] Fennesz came... [or] Thomas Lehn with his analogue synthesiser... machine-sounding things. Toshimaru Nakamura with the no-input mixing board, Sachiko M., Christoph Kurzmann. [...] Then you think, “Wow this sounds really cool, and I wanna sound like this”. And then you find out sounds which work well with that.

Burkhard Beins described how string players from Neue Musik helped him to realise new developments in his own repertoire of materials and techniques:

All those sounds and playing techniques for string instruments invented by Helmut Lachenmann - friction sounds, bowing the edges of the instruments, tonelessly bowed strings... [were] very prominent within the playing of all the string players I was working with throughout the late Nineties and early 2000s. Analogously, the brass players were developing new ways of producing differentiated shades of toneless noise and hiss.¹⁵ The fact that I was investigating the subtleties of percussion material produced by friction rather than beating can be seen within this context, although I was never thinking much of Lachenmann while developing it.

And in the opposite direction, playing with instrumentalists helped to shape the output and materials of electronic musicians - JD Zazie describing how, at the beginning of her career:

I noticed some limits of my tools compared to other musical instruments [and] I was continuously experimenting with possible ways to develop my techniques in order to react in real-time. [...] As a DJ, I was used to have the control of the whole ‘story’ that I was telling. Playing with other people was a completely different experience - I had to figure it out, how to create a conversation with other voices and instruments. I learnt to reduce my way of playing and to focus more on specific little ‘sentences’.

And she continued to describe how such experiences had also affected her choice of materials and instruments:

¹⁵See [Fagashinski, 2011] and p. 172 for more examples of materials common to several improvising musicians.

I noticed that as an instrumentalist you just think and you can immediately play a certain sound, or a certain melody. As a DJ, or as somebody that plays pre-recorded material you might have a delay - I mean, if someone plays something and I if want to react immediately to that then I have to find the right disc, choose a track, push play, you know... and then maybe when you are ready, the 'nice moment', it's over.

That's why I thought to prepare some CDs with a variety of different sound material, or possible directions on that I can access immediately. [...] That's really a much better way to work with sampling.¹⁶

Variety, Flexibility, Development and Limitation

In this last quotation, JD Zazie makes an important point relating to many of Berlin's contemporary improvisers, and the qualities that were felt to be essential to a 'good' collection of materials.

Whilst ideas of authenticity and 'strength' will be covered in Section 9.1,¹⁷ most musicians pointed to the importance of not just having well-chosen (and personal) materials, but also that these materials should be flexible, ever-developing, immediately accessible, and broad enough to integrate into a wide range of musical situations.

For Klaus Kürvers:

An improviser has to react to situations, otherwise the improvisation makes no sense. How do you behave in unforeseen situations and how do you train yourself to make fast decisions? That is the core question. [...] It's about being able to negotiate and move in unforeseen circumstances. [...] You really have to realise what's happening in the moment and make a decision, and in none of the arts is it as fast as in music - it's as fast as light, it has to happen in that instant. You have to assess the situation and make a decision in the same instant, otherwise it's too late and the context has changed, [and] it would have to be another decision.

And, talking about the importance of having a wide range of available materials, he continued:

For good musicians and good music this is the case, but there are other musicians whose vocabulary is relatively stuck. [...] When it's rich enough, that's a mastery, and convincing. [But] when this vocabulary isn't particularly rich, it's not enough for a whole concert - it's just enough for 5 minutes.

¹⁶See Burkhard Beins' similar observation about starting and stopping tapes (pp. 140), and p. 172, for more on how electronic musicians selected and prepared their materials.

¹⁷See p. 190.

Kürvers also pointed to the importance of each musician actively developing their own personal repertoire of possibilities:

As soon as somebody starts using pre-fabricated patterns... the music becomes predictable, [and] for me it's deadly boring... just like beginner jazz musicians who take 'licks' from Louis Armstrong and Charlie Parker and play them through all twelve keys. [...] That's just as boring for me as talking to somebody who keeps telling me the same joke again and again.¹⁸

And, accordingly, even those musicians with the strongest homogenous voices (or who didn't switch between style or sub-genres) aimed at a certain level of compromise and fluidity - Antonio Borghini sometimes playing more in the direction of jazz, for "the good of the music", or, in the words of Rudi Mahall:

It's just like when you have a conversation with somebody - you don't just start talking about something completely different, you make some kind of compromise. And when I'm playing it's exactly the same thing. [...] If someone was playing Clavichord (it doesn't happen too often)... then I don't play super loud. Then you don't hear the thing any more. It's a compromise. I would probably prefer to play louder, but if someone's playing flute or sings, or plays piano... then that's how it goes. [...]

[If] there's someone who would rather play melodies, someone who wants to play more rhythmic music, and somebody who doesn't really feel good playing rhythmic music and would prefer to play noises, then I'd also play noises with them.

Just as with the limitations of repetition, however,¹⁹ musicians were also aware of the limitations of their flexibility, and as Mahall went on:

My problem is that there's things that I can't do so well.

There's lots of things I can't do. If I could, I would make more compromises and also do more of what they want, but I can't do it! I have to stick to my point. Because in a certain sense, I'm extremely inflexible. I mean, this strange instrument doesn't fit in well... [in] a lot of contexts. [...] For example, in electronica - they make amazingly interesting sounds - [but] what am I supposed to add there with my hooter?! I mean I can do a couple of [sounds], but there's guys like Frank Gratkowski who can do it a lot better, because he works so hard in this area.

And, as well as breadth and flexibility, a lifetime development of materials was valued by several musicians, Nils Ostendorf looking to Axel Dörner, one of his own inspirations,

¹⁸Also see improvisers' experiences of good and bad teachers, who either encouraged or discouraged this (Section 7.3).

¹⁹See p. 156.

and describing how:

When I saw [Axel] the first time live I couldn't believe it. I mean still when I see him solo live it's very impressive. And he comes up with new sounds every time I see him. And he has a big palette of sounds, and it's not only about sounds, but about really how he uses them, and the durations, and he is really seriously good about it.

Also talking about Dörner,²⁰ Tobias Delius described how it was not important that all of these materials were employed or were always on display:

It doesn't mean that you have to cover all the worlds every time you play - you don't have to show that you can play a melody, show that you can swing, show that you can make funny noises, show that you can be silent, show you can be loud, show you can be groovy, show you can be whatever. But the fact that it's there somehow, in your conscious [*sic*] or in your experience... it's somewhere behind the horizon.

And Klaus Kürvers expressed that a wide range of materials didn't necessarily mean that the music would become impersonal:

Axel has the biggest spectrum and works in the most different musical contexts, and in spite of this, Axel remains Axel [*Axel bleibt*].²¹

Delius, however, pointed out that just as there were certain musicians for whom "the doors or windows... can open in many ways, in many directions":

On the other hand the last thing that I want to ask is that all players have to have... these thousands of languages. It's also sometimes interesting just to play with someone who *can* and *will* just do one thing. [...] It's hard to put your finger on exactly what it is, because everything you say you can think of an example of the opposite which is just as nice, or as true.

And Clayton Thomas, whilst berating one musician for the quantitative limitations and originality of his materials,²² concurred with Delius that in certain cases, a handful of musicians, who, as he described it, were "limited" either by a "conceptual decision or a technical limitation", could be held in equal regard - their extreme flexibility within a small field of possibilities, if done well, held to be of equal value.

Thomas gave the example of saxophonist and electronic musician Thomas Ankersmit:

Thomas Ankersmit, [who] plays drones - that's what he plays, and they're

²⁰As shown on p. 120, Dörner's range of voices, substyles and materials was one of the widest.

²¹See also p. 190.

²²"At first I thought he was shit... a bad copy of Jim Denley... with half the technique and not as many sounds."

the most richly coloured, dense, overtone drones you'll ever hear over the saxophone, but that's *all* he does, so that's a different kettle of fish.

And, having now completed this survey of the nature and qualities of musicians' musical materials, my attention now turns to how these materials were practised, developed and maintained.

8.3 Preparation and Practise

Having examined the acquisition and nature of musical materials, and the need for flexibility, range, and the long term development of sounds, phrases and techniques, this section looks at the regular practise schedules of Berlin's improvising musicians, highlighting specific cases of the development of materials, as well as examining how musicians actively worked on flexibility and strength, and prepared for performance.

Whilst a minority of musicians were opposed to practising and, especially, practising improvisation,²³ most employed a combination of formal and self-invented exercises, as Tobias Delius put it, to “find a way to work on stuff that’ll make your control of the instrument apt to what you’re wanting to do with it”. And these desires, as opposed to concentrating on the mastery or interpretation of specific works or developing sight-reading skills, were generally relative to personal tastes in sub-styles, voices and backgrounds, as already shown in Chapters 6 and 7.

This section falls into five themes, all of which emerged repeatedly during interviews: conventional technical practise and the use of jazz standards and classical music; developing flexibility and avoiding the obvious; practise of noise- and sound-based materials; electronic musicians' preparation; and practise by 'doing' (improvising in private, either along with records or recording the results of solo improvisations to encourage learning and reflection).

Conventional Technical Practice, Jazz Standards and Classical Music

Despite having often rejected their formal classical educations on ideological grounds,²⁴ several instrumentalists still practised tools and techniques from their formal music education, and for those still active in classical and Neue Musik, this continued to a high level.

However, even having quit the conservatoire and not continuing as a professional classical bassist, Antonio Borghini told me that:

I still use a lot of the books I had at the conservatory... [for] just technical things... [and] some of the European classical music repertoire, orchestral or you know, pieces for double bass.

And for Borghini, who practised “easily 6 hours a day” even on concert days, the result was that:

²³See Section 8.4.

²⁴See Section 7.3.

Most of the times [when] I get to improvise... I feel I have no physical problems... and I'm very fresh with ideas. [...] After you played 4 hours of Bach... the will of improvising is there.

Jan Roder turned to classical études when confronted with a specific problem in his playing (usually identified whilst performing), and told me:

To make some things easy, I have some books... [and] I practice a bit some difficult parts... that have the same kind of problem in it - a technical one... [an] intonation one..

And several musicians, including Olaf Rupp and Andrea Neumann, played classical music behind closed doors, just as others worked covertly on jazz standards, even though they would never play such material in public. Antonio Borghini, Chris Heenan and Els Vandeweyer all practised standards, and Jan Roder used melodies from the mainstream jazz repertoire to simultaneously work on his *arco*-playing, intonation, phrasing and flexibility:²⁵

[Sometimes] instead of bowing classical études, I took some [Lennie] Tristano tunes... it has the same kind of effect, because I always used bowing also as intonation practice. And I think intonation is quite a thing on the bass. [...] I really love that, to just fumble around and to have the time to just try something out, or to get into a stupid bebop theme and just play that. [...] Before, I would do [*sings descending triads*], [but now] I would rather play [Charlie Parker's] 'Moose the Mooch' - take that apart and practise that.

In terms of basic instrumental technique,²⁶ Matthias Müller practised lip slurs and tonguing, and, despite much Improvised Music not being pulse-based in the conventional sense, he often played along to a metronome - as did Clayton Thomas, who commented that "Practising with a metronome is the best, metronome's a friend."

Olaf Rupp, describing how his practise had developed from "just improvising",²⁷ to including more technical exercises, elaborated that:

I practice boring stuff, technical stuff. I want to have this out of hand. There was a point, like 15 years ago, [when] I didn't do this, I'd just sit down and play. And I always realised, when you do this, you hear a lot of shitty music - the first hour it's only junk. Until the fingers are warm... and then after a while it's ok. [...] And I didn't want this. And so I thought it's better to sit down and get this done first, and so I play tremolos, maybe with the metronome, really slow... or [do] really slow yoga exercises with the left

²⁵Also remembering Anna Kaluza's comment that her jazz education had helped her to develop the ability to improvise in all 12 keys (see p. 147).

²⁶Remembering Michael Thieke's thanks to his Conservatoire teacher for sound production and breathing, p. 147.

²⁷See p. 175.

hand [*moves fingers*]. Ja. Just to get conscious, and blood [circulating], and flexibility into the fingers... Then you're ready, and then it feels so great! Then I go to the kitchen and play, and then I'm like "OK! It's there!"

And the flexibility that such basic technical foundations provided were essential to several instrumental musicians here.

Focussing on Flexibility and Avoiding the Obvious

Of those musicians using exercises from classical music, most were quick to steer away from its most immediate conclusions and solutions - selecting the parts they needed (according to the results they wanted), and looking towards towards personal and exotic solutions instead of accepting 'rote' methods.

Just as Clayton Thomas told me that basic technical exercises came much later in his musical development,²⁸ fellow self-taught musician Chris Heenan described how:

I avoided the major scales... because I was bored by that, and I needed to keep engaged, so the first things I learnt were the three diminished scales, which is insane! But I was very fascinated with their repetitive nature and how they're recursive - they relate to each other so easily, and there's only three of them... they're each trap doors to other worlds.

And so I started there, and then I worked my way back. And it took a long time to want to play C Major. And now it's different. Now I do it and I appreciate that stuff. But I really, really avoided that. There's a lot of things that I avoided, but that was one thing.

And Jan Roder, who generally preferred working directly on compositions and musical material, also did so in a deliberate attempt to avoid standard-sounding solutions:

What many people do on many instruments... [is] all the scales, and all the permutations, everything up-and-down and as fast as possible - that drives me crazy. I don't know what it is, whether it's the sound, or pressing those patterns in my mind... but I don't know. [*pauses*] I wouldn't use that for improvising.

For Roder, during practise, it was more important to focus on developing the flexibility of his materials rather than learning fixed or 'rote' solutions, and, as a result, more conceptual ideas from classical music (and serial music in particular) helped him directly with the fluidity of his pitch-based materials:

Some years ago... I started to have ideas of how to improvise with 12-tone lines... and I was just at home just playing walking bass... very slow... to

²⁸See p. 144.

try and concentrate not to repeat yourself. And then directly a different one! [laughs]. And then to figure out that “OK, that doesn’t work”, like, perfect, but you get ideas... just to get out of 2-5-1s in a way.²⁹ How to come to a different concept. [...] [Other people] write down numbers, and practise that up and down... and yeah, I also did that... but I kind of try to make myself flexible to improvise those lines, let’s put it like this.³⁰

And Els Vandeweyer, told me that whilst performing:

Then you always feel like “Oh this isn’t nice... how I can go different ways from it?”, and then [in practice sessions] I really forced myself to go in five different directions with one pattern, or sound-wise... you have a beater on the left hand... two notes [or] three notes, that you say “OK, I’ll stick myself in that kind of thing”, and then [with the] right hand, I make one decision: “Okay, I want only... 7s, like dominant...”, and then [work on that] to be able to be kind of free... and see where you come out with. Or... I want to use [a] one hand roll and then keeping this, or I want to play it in different ways...[to] do two voices, or one voicing in the middle, and then... three, four hours later again... you found it out... you just take a motif and you turn it around... in every way.

Developing rhythmic flexibility was also important, drummer Christian Lillinger explaining that:

What I practise... is to be able to think much more freely, with different ways of doing. For example, 6-over-7 things,³¹ so that I can create different layers - that you stay in a clear thing, but you can go everywhere, freely, in relation to this centre. [...] It’s also a training, of course, but so everything is possible, and so you can stay in these energetic situations, so that it flows. Not so that it becomes concrete, but that it’s a living thing.

And flexibility was physical *and* mental - Lillinger emphasising the need for physical suppleness in addition to ‘free thinking’, and Andrea Neumann describing that her aim, in practise, was to become “fluid not only with your hands, but also in your imagination”.

Many musicians looked to practices outside of music in order to realise these goals - Olaf Rupp and Nils Ostendorf practicing meditation and yoga, and Burkhard Beins going

²⁹Roder refers to the mastery of improvising over ii-V-I cadences that remains central to the mainstream jazz tradition.

³⁰Klaus Kürvers added, “I have choices to work with certain sounds, or with certain sets of pitches - everything which is used in composition. [...] To work with a small selection of pitches, which... are fully permuted. All these techniques for creating variation which we know from classical composition - forwards, backwards, higher and lower. [laughs] [...] There is one element that is being rotated, that you’re looking at from various sides.”

³¹Playing a six beat phrase in the time of a seven beat phrase.

swimming the day before a concert, “Because it’s very good for thinking, or finding a focus”.

For others, physical strength was essential, Antonio Borghini adding that:

There are some concerts that are physically very challenging. [...] If I know that the music’s going to be challenging physically... I’m gonna really just focus [on strength and stamina]. [...]It’s just like training... and being ready not to hurt yourself.

And for many musicians involved in (Post-)Free Jazz-related musics, part of this strength was the ability to play extremely loud for extended durations - Rudi Mahall using a non-conventional embouchure,³² and fellow reedsman, Chris Heenan, adding that:

I used to play just like [one] note for hours. Like low B flat! “Urrrrrrrrgh.....” [*sings it*]. You know, just play! “Urrgh...” [*sings*]. And just do that. Really just super loud. And I still, when I teach saxophone today, I say “Just play super loud.” In the beginning, don’t hold back! Let it all out. We can refine you when you’re a little bit farther along, but those first years, you just have to belt out. And then it’ll come... I know this sounds really weird, but that’s something I did a lot.

With quieter and less-obviously physical music, strength was equally important, Mike Majkowski telling me that:

If I’m holding a tremolo for half an hour it’s incredibly physical, it’s very difficult. I mean my body’s completely still, except for my arm... and it’s really really hard to do for such a long time.

And Clayton Thomas concurred, having developed a range of original practise solutions which dealt with the strength, mental flexibility and relaxation necessary for durational playing:

I’m really into time-based practice and meditative practice... musical meditative practice, and working out, like ok, I’m going to play the G string at 30 [beats per minute] for 40 minutes, and then I’ll play D for 40 minutes, or I’ll work through a pattern of rhythmic patterns all on 30 [b.p.m.], so it’s like the 30 and then the half, and then quarters, and then triplets, and then sixteenth notes. [...] This isn’t about whether I feel good or feel bad, this is about “I’m going to do this for 20 minutes, or I’m going to do this for 40 minutes.” [...]

It’s like these sort of stages of practice, with pizzicato, just open strings,

³²Mahall described how, “I can really help people to play loud on the clarinet, I know that. I know how it goes, it’s a trick... you have to practice it, but I worked it out... Most people play in a way that not too much *can* come out, because they play another way. They use a classical embouchure. And I don’t use a classical embouchure, something different.”

and then... just basic chromatic things, and then working through. I've got an hour-and-a-half drone series that goes through 12 keys, and I play major, minor, melodic minor, melodic... depending on what I'm working on, which scales I want to work with. In key. Slowly. Four beats of thirty. [...] And just be in that for the duration of that, do the rhythmic exercises, and then do the more technical exercises like fast spiccato, or tremolo exercises, or speed playing. [...] I'm really into durational playing, and I need to exercise it, basically. [It's] exercise for your ear and for your physical [*sic*], and not [to] put pressure on yourself... but that's like three hours just there, and that's not even getting to play music.

Sound- and Noise-Based Materials, and Extended Techniques

For instrumentalists involved in noise- and sound-based musics, discovering, maintaining, and developing extended techniques (including those inspired by electronic music) was also an essential practice part of daily practise, and, as Andrea Neumann described, testing out preparations in advance was essential, so that she knew the effect they would have in performance and could regulate and control this.³³

For wind players, techniques included multiphonics, circular breathing, white noise, hiss and percussive sounds (such as slap-tonguing); for strings and percussion, the Neue Musik string techniques described by Beins,³⁴ as well as preparation with road signs, drum sticks, metal bars and the use of various beaters instead of the bow; and for guitar and piano, covering the strings with felt, rubber or paper, attaching magnets or bulldog clips, and hitting the strings, again, with a variety of sticks and beaters. Many brass players had control over a wide range of mutes (conventional and self-invented), and many musicians liked to deconstruct their instruments - removing parts of tubing or the bell of a clarinet.

Jan Roder explained that this area of practice took a great deal of patience and control:

[I] try to find a lot of *flageolets* [harmonics]... you have all those different spots, and that's very complicated, very delicate, because also it really depends. [...] If you play this *here* [*mimes fingerboard of bass*], between some *flageolets*, then you have a certain spot where, with an exact kind of pressure, [that] if you put the bow there, then you get a very nice [sound].

³³See p. 159 for more on Andrea Neumann's practise. Also a question of taste, other musicians, and especially those from jazz-related areas were not interested in using extended techniques at all, Anna Kaluza telling me, "I think when I use some noises I always think of them as a very tiny part of my music, and maybe one little aspect, and then I always want to go on and away from this again. So melodies, or something like that are important, otherwise I immediately start missing something... probably I wouldn't enjoy a complete noise concert."

³⁴See p. 161.

And whilst each musician had an individual repertoire of techniques and sounds, a certain number of shared materials were nonetheless evident - these commonalities most visible in the work of drummers and percussionists using zithers (bowed, hit, prepared, plucked), chime bars (often bowed to produce high, pure, sine-like tones), Tibetan 'singing' bowls (also bowed) and marbles (rolled across the surfaces of drums, sometimes rotating the drums themselves). As well as being hit, drumheads would be massaged or scraped with a variety of materials including polystyrene, sponges and steel wool, and placing cymbals on top of a drum (and using the drum as an resonator) was common to many musicians, as was the use of chopsticks, rubber beaters, twigs and straw (as beaters). Some used megaphones or 'contact' microphones to amplify drumheads and cymbals, and most came armed with a barrage of small percussion items - ranging from tambourines, woodblocks and bells, to squeaky toys and even a (creaking) door hinge from a local hardware store.³⁵

Electronic Musicians

As shown on page 160, electronic music had a considerable influence on the development of instrumentalists' sound- and noise-based materials and, before looking at musicians' use of recording in practise sessions, this section looks at how electronic musicians developed, practised and selected *their* materials - this functioning somewhat differently to their instrumental colleagues.

Just like instrumentalists, electronic musicians chose their materials based on taste, and identified the need for new materials whilst performing. However, the materials in this case (with the exception of 'no-input'/feedback mixing desk-performances, and when source-sounds were taken from live instrumental performance) were drawn from a variety of pre-recorded sources, both self-made, and commercially available.³⁶ JD Zazie told me:

I use a lot pre-recorded material like field recordings... [and] I work with layered memory. I play something myself, then I record it, then I play it myself again, and I record it. This process could go on with no end. I stop when I feel happy with the rough open structure (kind-of dirty, with no beginning, no end)...[and it's] ready to be written on a CD, in order to be manipulated in real-time during the live set.

³⁵There were also three main setups of percussion instruments - a more-or-less conventional drum kit (often plus a bag of self-chosen 'toys'), a set-up inspired by Neue Musik (concert bass drum turned on its side, and prepared with everything from marbles to cymbals, hit and scraped across the surface) and table-top setups consisting of 'toys' and 'objects' alone.

³⁶Sadly, an investigation into 'no-input'/feedback mixing desk-performances was beyond the scope of this study. See p. 162 for more on JD Zazie's setup. It is also important to note that 'Live-Sampling' was relatively rare, with most electronic musicians acting independently of their instrumental co-performers and not processing their sounds. Performances of instrumentalists who processed their sounds electronically took place mainly in electronic/noise/drone venues such as Loophole and Madame Claude.

On the CDs I have mostly field recordings, [and] on vinyl, it depends - I sometimes use sample records and sound effects records as well... [and] I also like to use the silent/noisy parts of the records (crackling sound of the needle on the vinyl), and jazz and 'experimental' electronic music records.³⁷ [...] So using the full potential of vinyl - all the way from very noisy sounds right through to minimal electroacoustic things... just grabbing individual tones, or small elements.

Pointing to the importance of flexibility, she added that:

Depending on the atmosphere or the context, I choose some records - mostly more than I'll need, so that I always have an open range of sounds available, just in case I change my mind in the moment.

And others, such as Mario di Vega, spent considerable time building their own instruments (in this case a 'hacked' DJ mixing board with exposed wiring leading back inside or to various external homemade circuit boards),³⁸ with most electronic musicians employing various pre-recorded CDs, minidisks or cassettes, which fed into mixing desks (standard and DJ mixers) in order to create layers, collages and feedback loops.³⁹ In addition to creating their own sound-sources, musicians working with computers would often code their own software and 'patches', using programming environments including Max/MSP and Supercollider, as well as 'off-the-shelf' solutions such as Ableton Live, and in doing so, also created bespoke instruments that fitted their musical needs.

Once again, each musician had various techniques specific to their own setup, and for Zazie:

When you're playing turntable, the object is the turntable, or the vinyls and the turntables... working with the needle to amplify tiny details, putting a microphone on the turntable itself.

However, even between musicians working with turntables, different styles and personalities were discernable, as "an evening of improvised experimental turntable performances" at Ausland highlighted - the similarities and differences between performers, and their approaches, made clear by three solo sets and a trio performance [Ausland, 2013].

JD Zazie worked with the techniques described above, also placing records on the turntable off-centre and at an angle, so they would speed up and slow down, and sometimes using a sound-effects record intended for 'Horror' films as source material. Jonah, visiting from France, used (guitar) effects pedals to process the output of his

³⁷She added "I don't like to use the expression 'experimental', but it's just to give you some idea."

³⁸In one concert this even began to smoke!

³⁹At one concert the cassettes were marked everything from 'RAVENS' to 'NUREMBURG' [*sic*].

turntables, bowing a Chinese violin across the arm of the record player. And, finally, Joke Lanz cut more rapidly between different sound sources - juxtaposing rather than layering, and working with 'scratching', using recordings of baby sounds and speech as his materials.

The final set was a collaboration between all three musicians, and, during this performance, each used samples of speech, rhythmically and timbrally distorted beats (from rock bands to speeded-up African music), and each had a selection of LPs marked with pieces of electrical tape - giving them direct access to 'known', usable sections, and interesting samples.

When working with sample-based materials, yet more distinctions existed - for Zazie it was important that the sounds remained recognisable to her listeners:⁴⁰

If it sounds like feedback then it's because it's a recorded feedback... But no, I don't produce feedback and I don't use any filters when I play, apart from equalisation and what's in the mixer... For me it's important not to use effects because I use so many sound sources. If you hear just one or two minutes of a piece, of field recordings... it's already so rich itself... why should I add more?

Of course, that's my opinion. I think that some people would disagree with me - if you use filters, you can create patterns more easily and background atmospheres as well... But, if you decide to use them, you should really be careful that they don't become too dominant in your piece (of course this makes sense just if it's not your intention to focus on effects in your composition). I'm not against them, but I'm not interested in that. And the more I work with field recordings I realise that it's really important that some sound stays recognisable to the audience, that a relation to their identity is still kept - identity relating to sounds, sound sources and everyday life.⁴¹

However, others adopted a different approach, using studio production techniques, effects and sound processing to alter their materials prior to performance. Valerio Tricoli, talking about an old project where he used CD players, instead of the Revox tape machine with which he currently performed, described how:

My set back then was... CD players with a lot of sounds I was composing. I had a computer at that point, so I was making sounds to use live... I really never performed live with the computer, but I was... sound-designing stuff, and I had two or three CD players, and I was mixing. It was mostly field recordings, heavily processed.

⁴⁰See p. 230 for a more complete discussion of conceptions of sound in Improvised Music-making.

⁴¹A recording of a doorbell was one of Zazie's trademarks.

And, telling me about sounds created by recording drums and sending these into delays and gates in ProTools, whilst still avoiding entirely synthesised sounds (“more or less kind of as a small dogma”), Tricoli’s attitude to his materials was contrary to Zazie’s wish that the source of each sound remained recognisable:

I arrived at points where the sound I was starting from was this [*scrunches some paper on the table*], and the final sound, after all the processing, sounded exactly like a huge metal door slamming... And people say, “But where did you record it, this metal door so well?”. And I’m like “Man, it’s actually this” [*rustles the paper again*]. It’s like “Ugh?!”. [*disbelief*]

Just like Zazie, however, Tricoli used the process of recording and re-recording:

I work a lot with stuff on tape, so I do maybe I do field recordings, I process them with the tape, put them into the computer, then maybe I do some computer stuff on them, I re-record them on tape.

And he described his process as follows:

With synthesisers you sort of start from nothing, whereas I like maybe this idea of sculpting something that is already there, like you have a sculpture and you already see in this block of marble, you already see what’s inside... you start to carve it and *obtain* it.

Recording, Reflecting and ‘Just Playing’

To complete this survey of how improvising musicians practise and prepare for performance, this section looks at musicians who practised improvisation in private, either alone or along to records, and who would record these improvisations in order to reflect and learn from the process.

As bassist Mike Majkowski described:

Self-evaluation through recording has been a big part of my solo development. [...] I would record each technique for extended periods of time and I would listen back, and, with a pen and paper, basically analyse and critique and write down all the interesting things, and write down what’s actually happening physically and sonically. And from that half an hour there might be one minute where I was like “Wow”, and then I’d take that one minute, and try and do that one minute for half an hour. [...] Zooming in, this kind of microscopic ‘getting in there’.

For Andrea Neumann, such recording and reflection allowed her “to have a vision, and to realise it”, Bilianna Voutchkova told me how “This I do all the time... that’s part of my own way of learning [and]... developing”, and JD Zazie added that:

When I practice, it's very important to define a beginning, still keeping it open, but deciding how to begin, how to start the story. And then I just try things out, playing with other sound sources. When I rehearse, at the beginning, I really don't want to organise things too much. I just want to mix freely and then, after the first or second try, I listen back to the recording and say "This part was good", and then I ask myself *why*... I record just for myself, just to see what's working and what's not working. It's often more about working on specific details of mixing than the relation of sound sources... it can be better, it can be worse, but it's really more to do with getting deeper into technical details - how to play certain sounds, or if I have certain sound sources, how to abstract them if I want, or seeing how much I have to keep it concrete... there is always this balance between playing and listening back.

For Majkowski, in addition to finding details for exploration in his solo playing, recording enabled him to reflect on his timing, placing notes carefully in relation to one-another and describing how, working with specific musical materials:

Some days it's a bit too slow, some days it's a bit too fast, and then you realise "OK, so I can't play it too fast, I can't play it too slow". [If it's too slow] it kind of stops... If it's too fast, it doesn't give you space to experience it... it loses its finesse, it loses its subtlety, it loses its intimacy.

As opposed to creating recordings of themselves, many others, and especially those connected to jazz, emphasised the importance of practising by 'doing' and always playing 'in the music' (in other words, not practising abstract technical exercises), and Rudi Mahall, Tobias Delius and Els Vandeweyer all dedicated part (or all) of their practise routines to improvising along to records, primarily of the jazz 'masters'.

For Delius, from the beginning, and in addition to his uninspiring school clarinet lessons:⁴²

I started playing... and basically what I was doing was just playing all day... with the records, or just playing around actually, just trying to make the thing sound and stuff. I didn't really have a routine. I had various teachers over the years and I always had a hard time, still now. Every now and again I promise myself, "Now get yourself disciplined and go through this every day", and it's not my thing really somehow. I enjoy playing by myself, practising, but it's to somehow get yourself to where you're starting to sweat, starting to *do* it... I've always wondered what's wrong with me, because I'd see other musicians like going through this thing every day... just making sure that they have this half hour where they do their basic stuff. Somehow

⁴²See p. 148.

I don't work like that.

And Rudi Mahall described how practising in this way helped him to alleviate technical problems indirectly, having entirely rejected his classical practise regime by this point:

Well, I'd been learning clarinet, the traditional way, in the school, and technical exercises, études, repertoire... and I'd always practised that way. 20 minutes of long tones, then scales for three quarters of an hour, and then études for three quarters of an hour. And then repertoire for an hour. I practised like that every day and that was a routine. You don't notice whether it takes three or four hours because it's a routine, just like doing the washing up, not really very stressful. And I stopped the routine when I decided that if they [the Conservatorium] didn't want me, then I didn't want them either.⁴³

And then I bought the bass clarinet... and then I tried... It's a totally different instrument, so I tried to learn it again. Again with these études, tricks. For example there are 'long' notes and 'short' notes on the clarinet,⁴⁴ and it's very important that you can connect these. This didn't work at all. And so for three months I tried work on these tricks in the traditional way, but I didn't get any better. [...] Then I saw a film with Ben Webster in Copenhagen. Do you know the film? It's about Ben Webster. And he was looking out of the window, and how was he practising? He had a record on, and was practising with the record. I saw that pretty early on, when I was 12. And then I thought that was how you practised jazz. [...] You put it on, and then you somehow just play with it. A few notes... And then, like I said, there was this long period where nothing was working on the bass clarinet, and then I just thought, "OK, then I'll just put the record on too", because it was getting the better of me. At the beginning it sounded really terrible! [laughs] [...]

And then I started to play along to Joe Henderson, 'Page One', and I practised along to it, and it sounded terrible, but it didn't matter - I thought I just had to keep going. I never got it together to buy a practise book on how to improvise, or of ii-V-I patterns, or Aebersold.⁴⁵ I just never had the idea. And then suddenly, after a week, the technical difficulties just disappeared. Somehow they just disappeared.

⁴³See p. 148.

⁴⁴Depending on the length of the air column - with all holes closed the column is 'long', and with all open, 'short'

⁴⁵The Jamey Aebersold 'Play-a-Long' series for jazz musicians, which consists of several volumes of popular jazz tunes and standards, with a 'backing' tape. See footnote, p. 169, for more on ii-V-I progressions.

8.4 Exceptions

To conclude this Chapter, two brief yet important exceptions are necessary to complete this survey of musicians' practise and preparation: firstly, a minority of musicians who did not practise at all (and who, especially, never improvised in private) and, secondly, musicians who used 'controlled-discontrol' to generate and explore new materials during the course of performance, and who departed from their repertoire of practised and immediately-available materials to create surprise, freshness and specific musical effects.

Not Practising

Contrary to fellow electronic musician JD Zazie's private recording and reflection, and despite his time-consuming preparation of sound sources, Valerio Tricoli was almost entirely opposed to the idea of practising improvisation before performance. For him:

It doesn't make any sense to me, to practise... [and] Hans-Georg Gadamer⁴⁶ explains this very well. There is this concept, this old German concept, of the *Kammerspiel*. *Kammerspiel* is, in the beginning, the idea that you play for yourself. So that you play without an audience. What Hans-Georg Gadamer says, is when you play with no audience and you just play for yourself, anyway you are projecting the idea of an audience outside of yourself. And this idea of Gadamer I think is very true.

But this projection that you make... it doesn't give you any fucking feedback. So the tension that you have is between you, musician, and you projecting yourself as an audience [is] just so self-centred that there is no way that you could do what you're actually doing when you play live.

Like Tricoli, who described how, "Even if I buy a new small piece of gear, I maybe try it once before then performing with it - try it once and then, 'Oh, ok. Let's see'", Burkhard Beins investigated his materials only on the most basic level prior to performance:⁴⁷

If I find something new that's interesting I'm trying to explore it a little bit more on my own, but then I leave it, and then I just explore it in the actual work process or playing process. [...] Practising is not what I'm so interested in.

⁴⁶Gadamer (1900-2002) was a German philosopher best known for his 1960 work Truth and Method (*Wahrheit und Methode*).

⁴⁷Despite Beins' advance mental preparation (see p. 170).

And Nils Ostendorf routinely took anything up to 10 days away from playing,⁴⁸ describing how he generally preferred to do an hour of yoga or spend the time exchanging with colleagues. Showing again, that practise was focussed specifically towards what improvising musicians wanted to do, Ostendorf feared that too much conventional practise made it more difficult to work in the way he wanted to (with noise, air, multiphonics and extended techniques), and he explained how:

If I practise actually a lot... it's much harder.... because it's really about playing inbetween the notes, also inbetween the harmonic series. [...] If you practise a lot... every [pitched] note really locks in.... so it's harder for me to really play between the notes.

I also got sloppy on this whole attack and very clear trumpet [sound], like all these articulation things, because I never now want to practise any more these stupid Arban things.⁴⁹ [...] The music I play I don't need it so much - I don't play any 8th note lines, any 16th note lines.

And for Ostendorf, as for many older musicians, periods of long intense personal practise lay firmly in the past, the purpose of this private work having changed significantly over time, and Tristan Honsinger suggesting that:

I think there's a lot of people that... to develop, they go through a time of exploding... of playing as much as possible. [...] I can't imagine it any more, though I'd done it for maybe 10 years before I became really tired of it. [...]

I don't practise that much any more. I only practise when I'm in the process of writing... until I find something I can start writing, which is a total[ly] different process. [...] I used to practice to find, to extend my thing, whereas now it's the opposite... now it's more to define it, to take away things rather than to add on to.

Controlled-Discontrol and Materials Developed During Performance

This chapter has presented a picture of musicians who were generally extremely clear in their intentions whilst improvising, drawing on a repertoire of 'known', pre-prepared, yet still-flexible materials in order to create new and unpredictable collective musical outcomes during the course of performance.

However, just as Tobias Delius said, for "everything you say, you can think of an example of the opposite which is just as nice, or as true",⁵⁰ and as Beins and Tricoli's reluctance

⁴⁸Also owing to a busy family life and working full-time as a composer for theatre - "10 years ago I could practice for 4 hours a day", but now "I get pretty bored practising trumpet - [after] more than 45 minutes I just don't know what to practice any more!"

⁴⁹Ostendorf refers to the Arban 'Cornet Method', a book of exercises and études used extensively by classical trumpeters.

⁵⁰See p. 164.

to practise suggested,⁵¹ some musicians also occasionally generated and explored new materials whilst improvising - deliberately choosing to play in an uncontrolled manner, and doing so in pursuit of specific musical effects.⁵²

Delius described how:

The nice thing is you pick out the horn cold and the music's started already, and you really don't know how much control you're going to have over the first 35 notes that are coming out. I like that challenge also, of kneeling yourself into the instrument... forcing it... getting back onto some wild pony... in the sense that I'm not really sure what's going to happen if I put air through now.

And he contrasted this with the certainty of 'known' materials:

I like both worlds... [it's] fun to deal with the lack of control in a way, but in the end what you really want to have *is* the control.

Axel Dörner added that:

I like the idea of controlled-discontrol. [...] Basically I know what's happening if I do certain things, but sometimes I like to play the trumpet a little bit like a synthesizer, where you turn a knob and you don't know what's happening. Or you know roughly what's going on [laughs] and... you have to deal with this. [...]

Certain sounds are very difficult to control, but I like to play with them and to put them in a musical shape where they make sense. That's the idea.

And Chris Heenan described how:

Some of the things I'm working with are on the edges of the instrumental reality... I work on stabilising that stuff, but you're playing a concert and then things can happen. [...] I have those moments... when I'm playing and I'm already at the edges of what this reed is thinking that it should be able to do, and then something happens!

And me, that's what I practice... to do somersaults at that point... I'm at this edge. And the only way... is to practise getting out to outer space... [so that] when you accidently end up a little further then you can actually handle it. You can either cover it up, or you can ride that wave a bit further. [...]

I'm not always, at every concert, finding myself at the unstable point, but

⁵¹See p. 178.

⁵²This is markedly different to the explanation that Maschat and others interested in Performativity suggested in Chapter 3, where it was suggested that all musical materials were generated in the course of the performance.

this happens, because I'm using shit like that that's at the edge of what the instrument can really do. And you're taking a chance out there.

The willingness to take such risks was another question of taste in Improvised Music-making, and for Heenan working in this way was extremely important - remaining critical of musicians who didn't depart from their 'known' repertoires to explore such risks and possibilities.⁵³

Some people are just not bothering to use material that's out there, and that can falter... I think it's positive. It also gives it energy. And I can do that at home and it's cool, but that's not the same as with [an audience], because you're going to fail, sink or swim, and there's people to witness it.

And these thoughts were echoed by cellist Tristan Honsinger, who was, arguably, one of the most extreme in terms of allowing unprepared elements into his performances:

And so it is a kind of practice into the mystery of what is known and what is not known.

When you are improvising... you dive into something that you know *nothing* about. You have the beginning of something, and it's not clear. But yet you feel the responsibility somehow to do it, and it comes out how it comes out. But the importance is that it is done *when* you catch it. When it comes through your mind. A lot of the times people would rather do the things they know... rather than do something they never did before. [...] Sometimes I kind of lose myself completely. I could not tell you after it's over what I did. And other times, yes, I can be very objective and tell you "Yes, I did *this*, and he did *that*, and we went *there*".

Controlled-discontrol was also used by many electronic musicians, who often capitalised on the errors of malfunctioning technology, and JD Zazie, for example, emphasised that even in the most 'uncontrolled' cases it was only rarely that everything was totally out of control, describing how:

I also like to use the idea of pushing the limits of the technology itself, using the errors from the technology. So sometimes I like to use different CD players, some that work normally and some broken ones... bringing in the element of them manipulating the sounds by themselves, trying to work with that concept of error. And of course then you get some surprises! [But] actually this is pretty difficult to work with, because you still have to listen carefully and guide it - I mean you can't just let the technology get completely out of control!

⁵³See Chapter 9 for a more thorough description of the concept of Risk. Tony Buck's criticism of Clayton Thomas' repetition of materials also springs to mind as an interesting accompaniment to this argument (p. 145).

And overall, controlled-discontrol, and the interplay of predictable and non-foreseeable outcomes was something to be enjoyed and relished, Valerio Tricoli making the analogy that:

For me it's this feeling of feeling comfortable within something which is beyond your control, but you don't feel scared. It's like to go back to the labyrinth of Minos, kind of like "Let's take a walk in this labyrinth, let's be lost, but don't panic and let's enjoy the experience."

Burkhard Beins resigned himself to the fact that:

From my experience there will always be huge parts that are uncontrollable anyway, so if I control just what I can control, it's just a small part of it. [...] Very often it makes it more interesting because then you have the combination of controlled aspects, and random and uncontrolled aspects.

And Chris Heenan, concluding this chapter, looked towards one of his heroes, saxophonist Evan Parker,⁵⁴ describing how:

He's a good example, where he clearly knows the world, but then he suddenly hops out... but then he's doing it on such a high level [that] it's not a mistake, it's just like "Oh! A new room!"⁵⁵

⁵⁴Heenan referred to Parker's soprano saxophone improvisations and the recording *Monoceros*, in particular.

⁵⁵See p. 227 for a more thorough discussion of what constitutes a 'Mistake' in Improvised Music.

Chapter 9

Playing Together: Four Levels of Improvisation and Two Axes of Appreciation

In Chapter 8, I proposed the idea of Improvised Music practice as the real-time employment of a repertoire of individual, ‘known’ materials,¹ in a predominantly ‘unknown’ and ever-changing group context.

Having examined the nature, flexibility, acquisition and development of these materials, as well as their preparation and practise, I now turn to the collective aspects of Improvised Music-making - investigating ‘known’ and ‘unknown’ elements of interaction, and suggesting a range of conventions and expectations which enabled musicians to perform together.

Following a definition of ‘real’ or ‘pure’ improvisation (in terms of Improvised Music-specific concepts of ‘risk’, ‘the moment’ and ‘the field’, as well as issues of trust, awareness and authenticity), the second section of this chapter will examine the need for the two axes of appreciation when examining group processes (separating musical/aesthetic/sounding and processual/interactional levels of Improvised Music performance). A third section will use this analytical framework to explore three further levels of improvising, showing how (as distinct from ‘real’ improvisation) musicians also employed conscious interventions (tricks and strategies), pre-meditated rules and concepts, and ‘composed’ elements, in order to minimise ‘risk’, and to ensure more concrete and predictable ‘musical’ outcomes.

¹As well as occasional uses of ‘controlled-discontrol’.

9.1 ‘Real’ Improvising

As the Improvisation Studies literature explored in Chapter 3 already suggested,² musics from the Berlin Improvised Music scene existed along a continuum between those with more ‘composed’ and those with more ‘improvised’ elements - different elements, and differing ratios of these elements, being fixed and pre-meditated (composed) or realised in real-time (improvised) in each case.

As the previous chapters have already made clear, no single definition of Improvised Music sufficed to cover the range of practices I witnessed during fieldwork, and most musicians drew clear distinctions between ‘real’ or ‘pure’ improvising, more ‘cerebral’ or ‘conceptual’ improvising, and work integrating composition and improvisation - these differentiations delineating social cliques, identifying differing aspects of a range of musical practices, and forming distinct choices that, in some cases, defined performers’ entire musical outputs.³

‘Real’ or ‘pure’ improvising, was, as might be expected, the most ‘improvised’ Improvised Music, with almost nothing decided ahead of performance,⁴ and, as Andrea Neumann (who was also involved in composition and concept-based improvising) described:

This ‘pure’... ‘improvised music’ [is] when I don’t make a plan with someone else what we would do - we just meet and we play.

Representing a more purist stance, Antonio Borghini defended this approach as the only ‘real’ or authentic form of improvising, stating that any pre-planned concepts or strategies would directly oppose his freedom of expression:

It touches the very core of the process for me, which is... the freedom to [make] your own associations with things. [...] For me [it] would be very hard to know that I can’t do things when I improvise.

And, distancing himself from those who pre-planned, imposed constraints or worked with strategies and rules,⁵ and preferring changes in musical direction that came about ‘in the moment’, Borghini explained:

I think it’s very dangerous to push a player into a line... [and] that’s the risk of conceptual improvising. [Sometimes people say] “OK, let’s play just *pianissimo*”, and for me this is shit. I mean, OK, but I would rather have you playing that strong that you’ll *make* me play *pianissimo*... As far as Improvised Music is concerned, that’s my point.

²See p. 55.

³As in Chapter 6, all the terms used during this chapter are those used by participants themselves.

⁴See footnote, p. 215.

⁵By contrast, Borghini also played highly composed jazz-based music, but nothing in between (see p. 211).

As Borghini intimated, for many musicians concerned with ‘real’ improvising, all the instructions for music-making existed in performance itself (with no need for prior discussion or arrangement), and these instructions took the form of a series of mutually understood signs, generated by performers (drawn from their own materials and occasionally those discovered ‘on-the-fly’), and that each musician listened for and reacted to, in order to construct a collectively composed piece. Contrary to the claims of those involved with performative approaches to Improvised Music, this musical ‘emergence’ appeared to have little to do with any feedback between performer and audience (instead it formed a more closed system with the other musicians on stage),⁶ and far from this happening by chance, divine intervention, ‘randomly’ or otherwise, this process was described as the result of awareness, mutual understanding, trust, listening and experience.

Biliana Voutchkova explained how, in the moment:

The way that I always play, I allow things to appear. I don’t make necessarily decisions [*sic*]... and the decisions are more like ‘matter-of-fact’. You come to this point when this *is* the thing to do, and it’s not really coming of “OK, now I will do this”, but it’s coming of “This is where we’re going now, and this is where we are, and there is only *that* that I can do”.

There is not so much freedom in the sense that “Ah, I can do anything”. No, no. It’s like a very particular thing. And this comes from this sensitivity that you build... and the people around you.

Things appear somehow, and they go a certain direction and then you learn to follow this, so it’s somewhat again dealing with the unknown, but at the same time you recognise certain directions. [...] There is already somehow the consciousness about it and the knowledge about it.

Confirming the importance of Pressing’s suggestions of feedback and feedforward,⁷ this process drew extensively on previous experiences, skills and ‘known’ materials, as well as performance-specific knowledge of what had happened already and predictions of what was to come. Memories of what had worked (and to what extent) in similar past situations were also called upon, and, according to many musicians, all of this information was continually accessed and re-written, not just within one performance, but over a lifetime’s work.

Pointing to another defining feature of ‘real’ improvising, Voutchkova added that this thinking could and should be so fast that she considered it “instinctive” or “sub-conscious”,⁸ and she described how:

⁶See Chapter 8 for more on materials and ‘controlled-discontrol’, p. 202 for a more thorough discussion of reactionary stances, section 3.3 for more on performativity, and p. 234 for more on performer-audience interaction.

⁷See p. 71 and Beins’ reference to shared experience on p. 155.

⁸The terms “instinctive” and “sub-conscious” are used loosely here, as they were during interviews,

I'm not thinking... [and] it's the wrong term for this work. There is no thinking happening. Or maybe we call it intuitive thinking or something. [...] It's somehow connected to the body, and is connected to the experience and... to responding to some things that are already happening. So it's more a responsive thinking, if you want to call it [that]. Or intuitive responsive thinking, then, rather than "The composition has to go this direction *because...*". [...] It's not coming this way.

One listener compared such "sub-conscious", 'real' improvising to martial arts or driving a car, adding:

I think that's one of the principles of the whole thing... you learn, you learn, you learn the technique, but to master the technique you have to forget what you learn. And I think at least for my perception, it's [about] the people who forgot... what they learned, and simply *do* - like you drive a car - you don't think about driving a car. [...] The technique is no question, the thing is no question... it grows out of itself.

Conventions, Expectations, Experience and the Field

Despite these somewhat romantic accounts of the exact cognitive mechanics of 'real' improvisation, it was nonetheless clear that the possibility of collective music-making in this context took place within an underlying framework of trust, shared expectation and mutual understanding.

Most musicians offered detailed explanations of the scenarios in which 'real' improvising functioned best, and it is these expectations that I propose as the conventions underlying and facilitating 'real' Improvised Music practice.

These conventions, although generally not verbalised or explicitly taught,⁹ allowed 'real' improvisers to trust that the others wouldn't just do 'anything' (to the contrary, it affirmed that they had a common goal in mind in the creation of a unified musical work, even if the precise nature of that work was, as yet, unknown), and allowed them to co-operate in the creation of certain 'directions' (to use Voutchkova's term) that their colleagues would identify, respond to and develop during a section, piece or entire performance.

It was a responsibility and expectation that these directions would be recognised and followed (that improvisers would not switch chaotically between materials and would

and not with scientific accuracy. A more in-depth study of these interview materials from the point of view of Cognitive Psychology would be a subject worthy of future research.

⁹In most cases these conventions appear to have been transmitted and learnt through repeated listening and 'doing', as described in Chapter 7. Some younger musicians also told me that a handful of older musicians refused to discuss their practice entirely, insisting that their *protégées* "found their answers in the music".

stay within the confines of each ‘field’), and these expectations enabled the collective generation of form, coherence and narrative over the course of each piece, and each performance.¹⁰

‘Field’ was a term used extensively by Burkhard Beins, Michael Thieke and Andrea Neumann,¹¹ and each ‘field’ (specific to each group) was defined by the tastes, materials and shared interests of its members, as well as by the group’s history and experience. This knowledge made it possible to focus, limit and predict musical outcomes, as well as to identify common ground for exploration and development, and, as a result, as listener David Diaz pointed out:

If it’s a concert where the ingredients... are going to be Andrea Neumann and Burkhard Beins, you know what to expect.

For long-term groups and collaborations, knowledge of the Field allowed musicians to develop ever-deeper into specific areas, Andrea Neumann describing how:

When you play with somebody you don’t know, then... while you’re playing you find out what is the field, and when you know somebody before, then you know the elements better, what they are into.¹²

And, for Matthias Müller, the trust created in such long-term musical relationships was comparable to a strong friendship:

A good example, I think, is if you have a good conversation with friends. Then it’s like you can argue with them [and] we can fight about something, but... I’m sure that I can count on you, that you would help me get up again after you’ve knocked me out!

For this reason, many experienced improvisers preferred working in long-running groups,¹³ Olaf Rupp noting that, in this case, “many misunderstandings are already done”. And Jan Roder described how:

Then you come to something. And it doesn’t matter if in the end it sounds like [*Die*] *Enttäuschung*, or SoKo [Steidle] or... Phosphor. [...] If they play,

¹⁰The German term *Konsequent* (lit. ‘consistent’) was often used to applaud a ‘good’ performance – specifically that the musicians took one idea and stuck to it. See pp. 155 and 119 for other references to the ‘field’.

¹¹The term ‘Field’ was used mainly in English, and is distinct from the English translation of Bourdieu’s *champ*, or (sociological) Field (see footnote, p. 265).

¹²Tobias Delius added that even in the case of first-time collaborations, “Genuine, completely first meetings are seldom. [...] Either you’ve either heard the person before, or... somehow, by association, you can imagine a little bit what you’re [getting] into, what’s going to come.”

¹³Although some listeners preferred the excitement of ‘first meeting’ concerts, more experienced improvisers mostly saw local first meetings (as opposed to ‘all-star’ meetings at festivals) as social meeting-points, open rehearsals, opportunities to experiment with new projects, and to test whether or not they could still be ‘strong’ (see p. 190) in less secure situations (as Antonio Borghini put it, “To keep this kind of intensity, even when my fellow players are not there”). Such concerts were also held to be important for younger musicians looking to gain playing experience and social connections.

it's like 'Bwoar!' [*exploding sound*] [...] It's not "Boom ... Pluck ... Oh! ... Erm! ... Let's see what the other guy is doing!"

Awareness, Clarity, Form and 'The Moment'

Whether it was a group of 20 years or a first meeting, within each Field, trust was clearly key to the success of 'real' improvisation. As Tristan Honsinger said, "If someone does something odd then it will effect everything" and, as well as following group 'directions', there was also a responsibility to be coherent, clear and aware, and to contribute musical material that other performers could understand and make sense of.

Axel Dörner described how:

Like a composer, you write something, and what you're writing after this has to make sense out of what you wrote before. So I follow. I try to get a meaning into something where, if I play a note, and the note after makes a different meaning to the note I played before (and that's also for sounds)... one comes after the other.

It's like composing moment-after-moment, and each time I have to see what makes sense in the complete idea - how long something is in relation to what happened before, which kind of structures could belong together, or would work. The basic question is "What do I want to hear?"

In doing so, Dörner was active on several levels of awareness - in the present moment, but simultaneously paying attention to global structural concerns, and seeing 'the moment' in relation to what had already occurred and what he predicted might come. Referencing composer Bernd Alois Zimmermann's *Kugelgestalt der Zeit*,¹⁴ he described how:

Time is changing in a way which the future and past and present time become a certain kind of unit [that] you can move in. [...] I'm in the moment, but I'm also in what is called Eternity. Both at the same time. And it's not a line... it's like a [sphere]. [...] Many things go at the same time [and] everything is included.

Many other similar variants of this approach existed, with musicians dividing their attentions between structural/formal aspects, 'the moment', listening to themselves, listening to the others, recalling/executing/extending materials and comparing current situations to the past, and all of this occurred apparently simultaneously, or at least

¹⁴Describing a spherical concept of time, Zimmermann's *Kugelgestalt der Zeit* was previously referenced in Alexander von Schlippenbach's liner notes to the first Globe Unity Orchestra release [Schlippenbach, 1967], a group of which Dörner is now a member. Schlippenbach was a former student of Zimmermann in Köln (see p. 42).

on the super-fast ‘sub-conscious’ level that Voutchkova described as essential to ‘real’ improvisation.

Jan Roder estimated that while ‘real’ improvising he gave at least 20% of his attention to structural concerns, describing how:

I try to overview what is happening, but at the same time I try to let go as much as possible - to open up the space for intuitive reaction or... to be a little more ‘now’. Not to think about what am I going to do - “Now I see he’s doing *that*, and when he’s doing that then I’m going to do *this*”, because then I’m not playing *now*! That’s the problem if I improvise that way. [...] The other 80% is... a lot of listening what the others are doing, and then basically letting go of what I myself am doing.

JD Zazie explained that:

I like the idea to have a corridor with many doors coming off it, and each time, in the structure, I just open one door. [...] I show what’s going on there, but I don’t just stay there - I go on and on with my interaction, and I open another door and so on. [...] It’s really just about showing different possibilities, directions [and] perspectives, from little tiny details, to bigger and more complex structures.¹⁵

As a further tool for developing awareness, several improvisers referred to ‘The Music’ in the third person or as an entity existing its own right, and such musicians often pictured themselves as audience members, diverting their attentions almost entirely from their own activities. Clayton Thomas described one concert where, “I just did it watching from the outside, and the music absolutely took care of itself”, and Olaf Rupp added that:

It’s *my* music. It’s like a living being, and it comes alive when you do this [*laughs and mimes playing*]. [...] I always would like to hear what the audience hears.... to listen to all the instruments at the same level and with the same attention. [...] I listen to my music like another player, like a third player.

All in all, then, this discussion proposes yet another definition specific to Improvised Music-making - the idea of being ‘in the moment’ not implying being ‘lost’ in that moment (as Soules and others have suggested),¹⁶ but pointing to a state of awareness that encompassed both the present and its entire context (structural/formal elements, collective histories and experiences), and which could be experienced and assessed either

¹⁵Tobias Delius also explained that, “I do hope to find open doors and open windows, and if I do find them, make sure that they stay open, rather than shut them down.” See also p. 164.

¹⁶See p. 61. Only two musicians (and, perhaps interestingly, the only two with known hard drug experiences) mentioned becoming ‘lost’ as being a desirable outcome, and even in these cases, this was not felt to be desirable all the time.

from the inside, or from the outside in.

Authenticity, Honesty and the ‘Strong’ Individual

Having examined the multilayered awareness that constituted being ‘in the moment’, the ‘subconscious’ decision-making that generated improvisation, and the importance of the ‘Field’, the final characteristics central to many musicians’ appreciation of ‘real’ improvisation were those of ‘honesty’, ‘strength’ and authenticity - direct references to the expressive function of contemporary Improvised Music.

For many musicians interested in ‘real’ improvising, the values asserted by Knauer and Heffley still held true, with the maximum possible ‘honesty’ and emotional ‘nowness’ being sought, and such honesty and presence appeared to be of equal importance in (Post-)Reductionist, Free Jazz-related and electronic musics.¹⁷

Accordingly, I argue that personal expression formed an essential part of most Improvised Music-making - if not explicitly manifested in ‘screaming’,¹⁸ at the very least, being expressed on the level of musicians’ choice of materials (and their relation to them) as well as in the form of underlying social/political structures.¹⁹

One listener described this relationship, in the best case, as “strong”, “potent” and “able to live on its own”, and Biliana Voutchkova summarised that, ideally:

The person that is behind the music has this authentic relationship to his [*sic*] inside voice. [There are] no artificially added elements - acting in some way, trying to be good, or showing something. [...] The language and the outcome can be very different, but if I sense this behind it, then it’s done for me, that’s the good.

The same was true for those with several voices, large or disparate repertoires of (seemingly-unrelated) musical materials, and those who switched between improvisational sub-styles, and, in this sense, Steve Heather’s genuine love of stadium rock meant that

¹⁷See pp. 34 and 36 for Heffley and Knauer’s assertions. Whilst extravagant shows of emotion (or ‘screaming’) still remained in some Free Jazz-related areas, on the whole, today’s music was far less angry and outwardly passionate. Honsinger’s quote about exploding (p. 179) also applied to this emotional aspect.

¹⁸The term ‘screaming’ is used in the sense of the explicitly emotional high-energy playing of first generation Free Jazz musicians (see p. 29).

¹⁹See p. 238 for more on social/political stances. Very few exceptions to this proposition existed, Tristan Honsinger instead describing his music as a vehicle for acting, whereby, “It’s like poor theatre... a parade in the village in which everyone takes part. And they *have* to do it. Whether they’re embarrassed or not, because they have to belong to the village. [...] You don’t know how to dance, or you have no theatre background, but... someone says to you, “You! Become a policeman.” [...] But in the fact that everybody’s on the same level (maybe another person is a duck)... *no-one* knows what to do. [...] It’s a kind of beginning of total amateurism.” Additionally, Hannes Lingens and JD Zazie were opposed to the development of a ‘recognisable’ voice out of a fear of having to repeat themselves too much in front of audiences who “expected” certain things from them (cf. David Diaz’s expectations, p. 187), however, I would also argue that, in a way, this decision also represented something of an expression of identity in itself.

the band TUB was generally considered authentic, whereas other musicians who dabbled in pop and rock music in order to make money, or get famous, were often criticised for being ‘fake’.²⁰

These concepts were not limited to Improvised Music, and Christian Lillinger described all ‘honest’ music as ‘good’ music,²¹ Rudi Mahall asserted that the Beatles were just as honest as any good improviser,²² and Clayton Thomas drew comparisons between the “fundamental” sounds of John Coltrane and rapper Nas.²³ Most musicians and listeners concurred that the trained listener could sense such honesty “immediately”, and, in such cases, as one listener put it:

One note already says everything. And you can hear from the first note if it’s OK, or if it’s not. That’s all you need.

The same listener continued, accepting the empirical difficulty of the concept:

When it has a strong idea... behind it... then it *exists*, and it’s very potent. And it might happen that someone who has a very vast education in music... might produce that music that vanishes into thin air... and that is worth nothing in the end. If you might use that term ‘being worth something.’ [...]

[It’s about] strength or connection to what is life, or honesty. [...] There are lots of nice words to describe a [character of moral integrity], and... you can apply them all, [but] in the end, it’s simply “Is it there or is it not there?”

He compared this unquantifiable power to that of martial arts,²⁴ and other musicians and listeners also made analogies to conversation, Matthias Müller describing “strong” musicians as those who made convincing, original and interesting “arguments”,²⁵ and Klaus Kürvers elaborating that:

As a musician you notice if somebody’s really present with their whole being in their sound, just as you notice when you speak with somebody if what they say is what they’re really thinking, or if they’re thinking about

²⁰Christian Lillinger, for example, described musicians who he paraphrased, sarcastically, as saying, “I always wanted to play grooves, and then at some point I’m 50 and in the art scene, [and] then I’ll make a groove record”. See footnote, p. 128, for more on TUB.

²¹Describing two of his favourite musicians, he added, “They have always stayed true. Totally. They make their music and they believe in it.”

²²For Mahall, the Beatles played with “all their heart”, adding that “that’s what original music is, when you give everything.”

²³Thomas described how, “I think in the end it’s just [that] you can tell that the person who’s playing doesn’t have an ulterior motives. [...] I don’t want to hear someone play [like] someone else. I don’t want to hear you play someone else’s music. [...] I like it when I feel like I’m hearing someone be themselves. And if that’s like Nas, because Nas is a fucking great MC... it’s like ‘Yeah!’. I don’t want him to scat at me or fucking improvise some... abstraction, I want to hear him fucking rock.”

²⁴He described, “In martial arts you call it ‘the finger that points to the moon.’ I had this teacher... and he said, ‘Well, the finger that points to the moon goes like this’. He held my arm, and he says ‘Move the arm.’ [*mimes the immovable arm*]. And he said ‘You cannot move it, right? I’m too strong for you.’ I said ‘Yes.’ He said ‘Point to your nose’ - [*whistles*] and he’s [floored]! [...] That’s a phenomenon!”

²⁵See pp. 163, 187 and 197 for further analogies to conversation and theatre.

something else entirely. [...] It can be the same sentence, but if somebody thinks and says it to you at the same time, it's completely different to if they would read out this sentence and be somewhere else in their thoughts.

Another question of taste, honesty was valued to greater or lesser degrees by different musicians, and some prized the unfaltering preservation of 'strength' above the creation of a 'beautiful' musical outcome, whereas others compromised their personal freedom of expression to obtain more unified collective results.²⁶

Jan Roder told me how:

That really keeps it fresh, if you have people who really don't think "Ah - that worked - like we did it last time. *That* worked, so we have to do it again, *that* way." But to go there and just enjoy the moment in whatever state of mind you are [in], and start with a conversation or with the communication, and do something and build something out of now, and not out of [something] preconceived [*sic*] or a concept that you have of how the evening *should* be.

And, in a particularly extreme example, which described one of his favourite groups and showed the extent to which he valued this honesty, he went on:

We have [Musician 1 - he] is very steady in a way - always high quality, very good player, very 'there', in the moment. [Musician 2] - very up and down, depending on the amount of alcohol, and [Musician 3, who] is totally, incredibly moody if he plays free. It could be that he comes angry about something, and then, [in] the first set he only plays as loud as possible, or he comes and he's just [*quietly sings the fluttering sound of gentle swing brushes on a snare drum*]. It *cannot* work!

²⁶See p. 163.

9.2 Two Axes of Musical Appreciation

With this statement, Roder alludes to one of Improvised Music's greatest conundrums - his admission that "It cannot work!" raising all manner of questions as to why an audience should pay money to hear music that doesn't work, why the musicians don't try and make it work better, and, from an even more basic point of view, what it means to say that an improvisation 'works', or doesn't work, at all.

A recurring theme throughout fieldwork, musicians and listeners alternated between two levels of appreciation and analysis (in addition to the differentiation between individual and group levels outlined in section 8.1), and these axes of appreciation directly suggested the need to separate the musical/aesthetic/sounding outcomes of an Improvised Music performance from the processes and interactions that generated it.

As well as facilitating the subsequent discussion of levels of improvisation (section 9.3), this section acts as a precursor to Chapter 10 (which explores what musicians and expert listeners considered to be 'good' and 'bad' Improvised Music in more general terms), and proposes a theory which allows for a meaningful differentiation between performances with good 'musical' outcomes, and those which exhibited good interactional processes but which 'failed' on the 'sounding'/aesthetic level.

These axes of appreciation were by no means mutually exclusive, and, just like the four levels of improvisation that this chapter is concerned with, an understanding of these axes necessitates the clarification of Improvised Music-specific definitions of 'working' and 'good' music, as well as concepts including 'risk', 'honesty' and 'searching'.

Axis 1: The 'Musical' Level and Unified Sonic Outcomes

Improvised Music performances that worked on the 'musical' level were generally considered to be musical outcomes so clear, well-structured and united that "every note fits - it could have been written out",²⁷ where "everyone actually finds their absolute place in the thing", or, as 48-year-old Greek drummer Yorgos Dimitriadis described, where:

You have your place, your space, what you're supposed to do [and] so does everybody else... it's like rock... [when] everything clicks together, and when it all clicks, it rolls. [This] happens also with our music. [...]

What I love, is this kind of groove that you cannot put your finger on, you cannot say "OK, bass drum goes 'boom boom', the bass goes 'da da', guitar goes 'jagada jagada'. " [...] It locks together, it changes all the time, but it

²⁷See also Rudi Mahall's comments on p. 157.

stays in a groove... this music makes me dance... [and] with this glue, and this locking together, the whole thing *happens*.

Contrary to the above claim of absolutism, however, many musicians were quick to point out that ‘good’ musical results often occurred as the result of “good combinations” of “the right people”, and such ‘good’ combinations were generally defined by homogenous aesthetic aims,²⁸ as well as convergences of timing - on the micro-level (each note, the speed of events or ideas) and the macro (the shape and evolution of global structure).

Olaf Rupp thought that each musician had “a different loop time, or... *Halbwertszeit* [lit. ‘half-life time’] for the ideas”,²⁹ and Steve Heather described how, in a ‘working’ group:

You have the same sort of knowledge and the same understanding of structure and of form, and how to continue an idea and not cut it off too soon, or how to develop an idea, or what kind of development you’re going to do [next].

Tobias Delius added that:

That’s also in our music, that nobody can play with everybody. I mean, everybody *can*, and it’s worthwhile to try, but of course there are such things as failures, in the sense [that]... a lot of musicians you hook up with, you’d love to play with, and you try it out and you realise afterwards, “No hard feelings, but maybe we shouldn’t play together any more.”³⁰

And within this myriad of possible tastes and aesthetics, there was considerable potential for mismatch and misunderstanding, Dimitriadis describing how:

The best thing that could happen... that we are striving for, is that it ‘happens’ from the first second.

Chris Heenan, however, gave the following example of the kind of misunderstanding created by the opposite scenario:

I just played a concert with [another] saxophonist. [...] We’d been rehearsing at my house here, and we played differently than we had at home. It was

²⁸In relation to the aesthetic distinctions between Improvised Musics defined in Chapter 5. As Roder’s example already showed, (see p. 192), ‘good’ combinations of performers were not always necessarily entirely homogenous, many listeners and musicians also enjoying the frictions between unlikely pairings of musicians.

²⁹Rupp added that, “My turnover is also very fast... when I play solo I let myself go to this extremely, and I enjoy it. But very often when I play with others I have to stop a bit, and very often I say ‘OK, now it’s over, but do it a bit longer...’, just to make it easier. Because at a certain point it can be difficult for the flow of ideas in a group... I always think it’s better to leave early, before the party goes down! [laughs]”

³⁰Rudi Mahall put it more strongly, “I’m a kind of ‘leftie’. And I always found this music great... because I thought that there is no ‘good’ and ‘bad’... that we’re all brothers and so on. ‘We’re all brothers’, ‘All men are equal’, ‘Everyone’s something special’ and so on... [but] it’s not true. Definitely not... there are really people who are really assholes, who you don’t want to have anything to do with!”

much more aggressive, but also very static. But the thing is, we moved on on material too much... we [would] get somewhere and then one of us would move.

We weren't recognising the same things. I mean he would probably say of me that I missed the boat on something with him, but it's more like I heard *this* thing and he was hearing *these* crazy [things], and I was like... "we could stay here for a couple of minutes". But if someone leaves, then it doesn't work.

Over the course of fieldwork, I heard numerous examples of concerts where, as the musicians themselves often confirmed, things weren't 'happening', and where for long periods of time nothing appeared to be 'working', 'locking in' or 'grooving' between performers. These periods of 'searching' remain, of course, one of the qualities of Improvised Music often most difficult for the 'lay' or new audience to grasp, and the second axis of appreciation, described now, seeks to explain and justify the necessity of such 'non-working' sections, as well as suggesting a second listening strategy from which an alternative appreciation of Improvised Music might be drawn.

Axis 2: Interaction and Process

Aside from relatively rare occurrences where the musical level 'worked' consistently over the course of an entire performance, most 'real' Improvised Music concerts incorporated various degrees of 'searching', where the musical result was far from 'happening', 'grooving' or 'locking in', and the aesthetic outcome was far from united.

As Els Vandeweyer put it, "sometimes there's these really searching periods in the music where there's nothing much happening", and, in the words of Anna Kaluza:

Maybe there are amazing things happening at some point, but then there will be very strange moments too - it can't be avoided, and it shouldn't be.

Such "strange moments" appeared to be factored into the expectations of many musicians and expert listeners, who would content themselves with the promise that their patience would be rewarded later, and in such cases, the resulting 'working' music was usually deemed to be of a sufficiently high and unique quality to warrant the preceding vagueness and uncertainty.³¹

Kaluza's "amazing things" didn't need to be many, listener Cristina Marx telling me that:

³¹Klaus Kürvers described how, "For me, bad music is music that's predictable. When I know, or think it's going to do a certain thing, and then it does it... then I start to fall asleep... When I think it's going to do a certain thing and then something totally different happens, then I'm awake, that interests me. [...] You hear that in all good music."

Sometimes it just comes together and maybe it's just one short moment where you say "Wow!". [...] Last night... in each set, there were like two moments where I thought "Wow, this is really great."

And Antonio Borghini recalled a first meeting of Tristan Honsinger and English vocalist Phil Minton, where:

[They'd] been wandering around into nothingness for 25 minutes or something... [and] even myself, I was saying, "What the fuck is going on, come on, I mean you both have all the tools to get out of that... Come on! Do something!" [...]

And surely enough, the flower blossomed after 30 minutes, and probably [was] something that wouldn't have happened if they started doing their own tricks and were safe. [...] That was really enlightening.³²

For such connoisseurs, the searching could be just as enjoyable as the result, and Klaus Kürvers made a direct comparison to literature ("the crime novel is only about searching"), while Axel Dörner described how:

In the moment it feels very uncomfortable... where there's different levels of timing, or somebody's somewhere else in the musical structure. But then it's very interesting suddenly, the way it turns. [...]

That's part of it. Sometimes, if it doesn't work, it doesn't mean it's uninteresting music. It's maybe more interesting when you listen back to it. [...] I had this experience a couple of times where I'd play a concert, and the more uncomfortable part seems to be more interesting, [and] seems to have been more interesting for the audience.

Matthias Müller explained how, even if the 'amazing' moment didn't come:

It's not that I want people to fail... but... I can accept it if I have the feeling someone's really trying something seriously and it's not working. I mean we all know this, we have a lot of experience [and] it can feel pretty shitty if something's not working, but I think we also know the situation that we find out that something's not working, but it was... really worth trying it. Also, especially in front of an audience... this is so important.

To my mind, then, and based on findings from my interviews, this is the 'risk' that people talked of in Improvised Music circles - the risk that the music and musicians would not 'lock together', 'find their place' or 'groove', and the risk that 'amazing' moments would not emerge, that the flower wouldn't blossom, and that fresh, new, 'working' musical outcomes would not be found.³³

³²See p. 199 for more on Tricks and Strategies.

³³Similar 'risks' also applied to cases of 'controlled-discontrol' (p. 179), in this case the risk being

The Second Axis, Risk and Honesty

Especially in the case of ‘real’ improvising, such ‘non-blossoming’ outcomes were always a distinct possibility, and again, this suggested the need for a second axis of Improvised Music appreciation, with many musicians pointing to interactive processes (as well as the preservation of ‘honesty’) as essential tools in not looking to the ‘musical’/sounding/aesthetic result of a performance, but to the underlying personalities, interactions and relationships that generated it.³⁴

Valerio Tricoli described one concert, where:

A recording of that gig is not even music I think! It’s not even fucking music.

And several musicians and listeners made analogies to film and theatre, Anna Kaluza advising listeners of the Berlin Improvisers’ Orchestra:

Don’t expect beautiful music. Expect an experiment, and also a visual funny thing. [...] Maybe there would be bits of music I find beautiful and amazing, but most of the time I probably wouldn’t, and I think it’s not about the music as a product - it’s more about the process and the visual. It’s more like a show in a way.³⁵

One listener described how:

It’s like a character movie they show. It’s not only the music. The music is only the surface. [There are] lots of things showing underneath.³⁶

And listener David Diaz told me how he readjusted his listening strategies in real-time:

whether or not a new material would ‘work’ within the context, both technically and ‘musically.’ Borghini commented that to take such risks required considerable bravery, and, talking about Honsinger and Minton’s duo concert, he added, “This is something you don’t hear from younger players - myself, I would never have managed to carry the weight... you need the skills to do that.”

³⁴See p. 190 for definitions of honesty and authenticity.

³⁵See p. 244 for more on the importance of the visual in the appreciation of Improvised Music performance.

³⁶The same listener extended the analogy to a performance of a piano concerto, “What did I see? ... I’ve heard that piece a million times, I like it very much. I was not *d’accord* with how they played it - and then I looked, and there’s the director, and the symphony orchestra, and this piano player. The piano player, a young Jew, trying to achieve new forms of showing the piece with his own ideas, which he, beforehand of course, talked over with the orchestra, and the conductor... (a young man, East German), and the symphony orchestra from Madrid. The orchestra didn’t respect the conductor, but not at all. They were actually playing like against him. The conductor was already used to that and gave up already, but said ‘Please can you not help this young man on the piano!’. Because since they were so so eager to fuck the director, the piano player was a collateral damage! [laughs]. And he was always to the director ‘Please help me! Just one thing! Let me bring this next... it’s only five bars more! and then we do the thing... We talked it over a million times... Please please please!!!’. And they were like fucking the director and not listening - it was a disaster! Most people don’t hear that. They just hear - ‘I’ve heard it a million times’, and they bring it into the old structure, and when something strange is happening they don’t hear it because they have the thing already there, how it ‘should’ be heard.”

For me it's an issue of if I have to reconstruct it... in terms of the music... or just in terms of the performance. If I just have to say "OK, it was just a performance with some music put into it. But the important thing was the performance". Or... if I have to say... "It was... musical improvisation with a strong performative element, in which the musical part failed."

Honesty and authenticity played a considerable part in this appreciation, and in many cases, these qualities and the interactional/processual axis of musical appreciation were deemed more important than the realisation of a 'beautiful' or coherent 'musical' outcome. Risk-taking was key in such cases, and, praising one of his closest colleagues and collaborators, Christian Lillinger described how:

[This musician], he's incredible. He's always doing something different - he's searching, like a child. He searches, and for me it's totally fine if a concert is shit, because [he always takes] the risk to do something new. And sometimes, OK, it didn't work - but so what? He *tried* something. And that's really [this guy]. And it's great. And when it goes well, then it goes *really* well. That's what it's about.

9.3 Managing Risk and Prioritising the Musical: 3 Strategies of Conscious Intervention

Practically everyone for whom ‘real’ improvising was a goal agreed that attainment of the state where ‘good’ interaction was occurring, and the ‘musical’/‘sounding’ level was consistently ‘happening’ was (1) rare, (2) not always attainable, and (3) very much dependent on playing with ‘the right’ people.

And whilst Tricoli, Borghini, Lillinger and Roder occasionally valued risk-taking, honesty and processual integrity over the ‘musical’ outcome, others used a variety of Tricks and Strategies, Concepts, Rules and compositional elements to reduce periods of ‘searching’, to create specific (partially) pre-meditated outcomes, and to create focus and unity - purposefully restricting processual/interactional freedom in order to create more predictable and concrete ‘musical’ results than might have been generated through ‘real’ improvisation alone.

1. Tricks on an Interactional Level

For Tobias Delius, just as for the purest of ‘real’ improvisers, the creation of a certain ‘subconscious’ or ‘non-thinking’ state where improvisation could just flow was central to his musical practice. However, for Delius, it was also important to move in and out of this state, making conscious decisions that would affect the music being created, even though these decisions were realised in real-time and not agreed on prior to performance:

I try to come there thinking of it a bit like a blank page - “OK, let’s see what happens.” But I don’t think it’s only about that. It’s also about making conscious decisions about starting and stopping or trying something else or not. [...] It’s important also to... think, and to make strategies *as* you’re playing.

Similarly, for Olaf Rupp:

When I play... it’s like making a camp fire. [...] [It’s] a thermic process that creates its own energy by burning itself... [but] sometimes, like on the fire, you have to arrange it... you put some wood, you put it in. [...] I influence it. [...] I enjoy this game between the freedom and my influence on it.

As Delius and Rupp intimated, these ‘re-arrangements’ were, on the whole, quite simple techniques or ‘tricks’, and many musicians agreed that the most effective solutions for creating musical change were stopping, starting or doing something completely different.³⁷

³⁷For Tristan Honsinger, this consideration came from the essential question of, “Are you filling up a space, or are you making a space? These are... basically the two possibilities.”

Chris Heenan explained that:

That's actually a strategy. Just stop. [...] There's nothing worse than the person who's just continuing to play - they're out there just trying to fluff up a cappuccino of action. And you're like, "Just stop!" [...] That alone will change the direction of the music.

However, in other situations, it was felt to be just as appropriate to consciously begin something, as Andrea Neumann described:

Sometimes it's also good just to [shove] something in - it's complex, there's no one rule. [...] Maybe you have to enter to have ideas - then maybe a really interesting idea comes up [just] after you just throw something in.

As Tobias Delius pointed out:

[Sometimes] I feel or hear that the music needs just... for a completely new voice to be added, which may, or may not, have anything to do with what's going on already. Like another layer, which then, by default somehow, will become part of the whole afterwards.³⁸

And, giving a concrete example, he continued:

Let's say we're all... making a nice muddy rumble in the lower register, and that's going on, and we're all happy, we're enjoying it, or we're assuming we're enjoying it! [laughs] And then, suddenly, let's see what happens if I do something completely different. [...] "Ok - let's see what happens if I whistle a melody through my instrument now." Those kind of things, as if you might be reading a book and somebody just, [whoosh], flips a few pages - that can of course happen naturally, without any kind of pre-meditation, but sometimes it's also just like "OK". [Or] of course, also just stopping - just to stop playing, or just in a very quiet piece, saying "Look, why don't I just play a very loud event now suddenly", or something like that.

Olaf Rupp also pointed to the importance of inserting new layers of musical activity, momentarily suspending surface-level interaction, because:

In some situations it's really important to really consciously lock yourself to avoid making contact with the others. I think there are situations where this is important, because you thought to establish some roots where the tree can grow.

Attempting to predict and influence structure on a more conscious level to that of 'real' improvisation, and adding to the proposed Improvised Music-specific definitions of awareness proposed in section 9.1, Rupp went on:

³⁸Delius added, "I do like that area... both being involved in the group sound very much, but also sticking out like a sore thumb."

Very often I'm thinking about developments, and [I] try to anticipate dead spots - so I don't follow him to this, because I know it's better if I have something else going on when he meets his dead spot, or changes. And this is all guessing... it's all a game - because then [maybe] he doesn't go to that spot... [maybe] there *is* no dead spot when he plays! [...] You have your experience, but it's always different.

Just as musicians developed a collection of musical materials (some personal and others common to many), in addition to starting, stopping and changing, many improvisers also had their own repertoires of tricks and strategies, and for Tristan Honsinger, this included movement, spoken text or songs,³⁹ whereas Steve Heather occasionally used visual imagery.⁴⁰

For such musicians, a variety of possibilities existed at any moment, and another level on which decisions could be made was that of how to react, Andrea Neumann asking:

Do you react fast, do you never react, do you try to ignore the other one, or do you want to sound parallel, or do you want to sound completely together?⁴¹

Rudi Mahall took into consideration that:

I hear the notes that they play, and I can say which notes they are, and then I can decide "Ah, he's playing an 'A' now, what am I going to play over this 'A'? Or should I also play the melody that he's playing?" [...]

[Or maybe] I just repeat what I did five minutes ago... or maybe I'll play what one of the others was playing one minute ago, and simply play that.⁴² [Alternatively] if the others are playing loud then I might just start playing so quietly that nobody can hear me any more.

Just like the conventions of 'real' improvising, it was essential that the other performers understood the intention of 'tricks' and strategies, however it was also important that all musicians on stage shared the perception that the music needed to change in the first place,⁴³ Mahall telling me that:

With most people I play with, it's the case that whenever you play something,

³⁹The inspiration to move came from Honsinger's composition work: "I remember sometimes I would be kind of blocked. I had to write something, and I was in the middle of it, and I got lost. And I was kind of wandering around the house. And just the fact that I was wandering around the house got me back into it. This movement thing. Which I sometimes do in an improvised gig... it simplifies things for me, [shows me] if what I'm doing could be enough."

⁴⁰Heather described how, "Sometimes the sound can dictate an environment, which I can think 'OK, this is like I'm in a waiting room', or something like that... so I'll play something that helps to extend that fantasy."

⁴¹Different reactive strategies are explored in more depth beginning on p. 202.

⁴²Axel Dörner was well-known for using this technique, Antonio Borghini marvelling that, "Axel sometimes plays back after five minutes, things you've been doing".

⁴³Again, this was something generally better understood in long-running band situations.

something else changes.

Tobias Delius explained that, in less ideal cases:

Somebody might not even be aware! Other people might be thinking this is going along nicely, and you're sweating your head off, like "My god, this is going nowhere!"

And 'tricks' were to be used sparingly, Mahall impressing that:

In the best case I don't really think about it. I only start to reflect or consciously make decisions when it's not really going anywhere.⁴⁴

Tristan Honsinger described how his own use of in-the-moment strategies was:

...not to be devious... it's just about how the construction or the deconstruction is needed at this time.

And, for a handful of others, tricks and strategies formed part of a professionalism, whereby:

If I don't like how something's going, then I feel pressure - it's a difference between a festival gig and a normal bar gig. [...] You can go "This has got to get good", and "Fuck, this isn't happening!", and so "*I've got to make this happen.*"⁴⁵

3 Reactive Strategies

Before proceeding to examine Rules and Concepts, as well as musicians' use of composed elements in their (predominantly) Improvised Music-making, Andrea Neumann's question, "Do you try to ignore the other one, or do you want to sound parallel, or do you want to sound completely together?"⁴⁶ identifies yet another category of conscious choices which were repeatedly identified by participants - 'reactive', 'non-reactive' and 'non-listening' strategies for interaction proposing more distinctions and conventions which I suggest underlie contemporary Improvised Music practices.

Just like Neumann, Chris Heenan described how:

Michael Vorfeld and I worked on [this] a lot. Where we could really lock together and we could make something where you can't tell who's doing what, and who's reacting to what - [where] it's very closely connected. But at the same time we might have areas where two completely different types

⁴⁴Matthias Müller added that, according to his taste, being a 'strong' improviser meant "they can create something together and they don't need tricks. [...] That's the ideal scenario." Several 'real' improvisers felt that tricks, especially when used prematurely, also limited the possibility for 'amazing' moments arising from extended periods of searching.

⁴⁵The same musician told me that in festival situations, "I felt a huge amount of pressure to deliver."

⁴⁶See p. 201.

of material are happening - someone is... bowing a cymbal, and the other person's doing completely unresolved kind-of jagged material.

For others, these choices were often constant across their entire output, Olaf Rupp and Tristan Honsinger expressing a desire to work in 'non-reactive' situations, whereas Biliana Voutchkova preferred "intuitive, responsive playing", Nils Ostendorf chose to "blend" seamlessly with his colleagues, and Jan Roder distanced his Post-Free Jazz from the 'non-reactive' or 'non-listening' stances of first generation Free Jazz players.⁴⁷

For many, like Rupp and Honsinger, obviously 'reactive' improvisation was considered unsophisticated, old-fashioned or simply one choice within a much richer palette of possibilities,⁴⁸ and, instead, such musicians preferred a more abstractly-connected or 'non-reactive' model of music-making - an interactive framework concerned with independence and counterpoint, as opposed to blending and mimicry. As Mike Majkowski put it:

With the more conversational [reactive] approach, I feel that it's like there's always this confirmation... that, "Oh yeah! I'm listening to what you're doing, so I'm going to support that". Or "Oh yeah! I hear what you're doing so I'm going to jump on that". It's very obvious... But you know, you don't have to prove, in that very obvious sense, that, "Yeah, I can hear what you're doing" [...] You don't always have to follow the leader. You *can* decide to just play the exact same thing, but that would maybe be in order to create a particular sound, rather than just to show that "Yeah, I can hear what you're doing, man" [...]

And I think those situations I don't find so interesting - if one person's doing something, and the next person's already jumping on it... [this] cat-and-mouse sort of thing. [...] If one person plays a note, you don't even have to react, *or* you can play that note, *or* you can do something different. It just feels like the field's more open. And if you do choose to follow the person, it's not because you're confirming that you're hearing what they're doing, or it's not because of a conversational [need]... it's more like you're building something from below and constructing something together.

The difference, in plain terms, then, was as follows: as opposed to imitating, blending or copying (reactive playing), in 'non-reactive' cases, musicians were still listening (and entirely aware of their surroundings), yet, at the same time, they chose not to react literally to what they were hearing, instead, creating counterpoint with independent yet complementary musical materials.

This approach could be heard across most sub-styles of Improvised Music, however it was

⁴⁷See p. 111.

⁴⁸For the same reason, there was little-to-no discussion of 'quoting' other musicians (as in the jazz canon). See also, footnote, p. 56 for more on quotation in jazz.

often the clearest in the community surrounding Tristan Honsinger, who recalled his first experiences of such ‘non-reactive’ playing, with English guitarist Derek Bailey:⁴⁹

[It’s] a non-reactive type of music... people are on their way, with their own story, and somehow they relate... but the different lines that are created by the different musicians is non-reactive. It’s more associative, and associative and relative.

Recalling the earlier reference to the non-territorial aspects of his practice,⁵⁰ Honsinger continued that, “Bailey was always truly in his own world, complementing the whole thing”, and described how, when he would attempt to imitate the guitarist, “He’d just carry on with his way”. The cellist concluded that Bailey was, “very generous, but remained very stoic”, and told me that:

I also get annoyed when someone gets too close to my [material] and I will stop... and go somewhere else. Because... I am stating the independence of that part of the whole, and when someone else comes, then *they* have it. I just leave it because it’s already covered. [...] It’s [just] not to get all the flavour... over here, in the pie.

Honsinger continued that:

For me, Improvised Music is great when you can actually get four things going on at the same time. And also that you feel a unity in it. [...] It’s kind of like a modern Dixieland music, with different movements of playing.

And, comparing this way of playing to nature, he went on that:

Insects or frogs, when they’re calling, love-calling... the complexity, as such, is that there’s a definite indifference... and if there is no response you wait until there is.⁵¹

Klaus Kürvers made similar parallels to watching young children in the playground: one in the sandpit, another on a swing, another climbing a slide, all with their own individual activities but connected by the wider context of the playground itself.

However, this was an analogy perhaps better suited to the third and final reactive strategy I propose here - ‘non-listening’ being the only strategy where the popular retort that “It sounded like no-one was listening to each other” actually turned out to be true.

⁴⁹Beginning in the 1970s, Honsinger and Bailey were duo partners for some 10 years.

⁵⁰See p. 112.

⁵¹Honsinger added, “I suppose [it] is part of our social problem, which is that we get affected by what someone says. We get wound up... instead of being indifferent and letting it pass. And in music-making the same thing can happen. And I really think that when independence and indifference prevails, for the audience it can be very revealing as a social way. [...] There is this kind of human need to be together, and Improvised Music is more an autonomous manifestation, than ‘everyone together’. Of course we’re together, but there is that complexity of that need for the individual to experience to be part of something, or vice versa.”

‘Non-listening’ was just that. And just as Olaf Rupp sometimes ‘locked’ himself and suspended interaction so that new possibilities could emerge,⁵² many other improvisers deliberately ‘blocked out’ the others, to realise particular musical effects and create tension. Steve Heather explained that:

I remember once listening to a recording of the duo of Han Bennink and Misha Mengelberg... [and] they started... poles apart, like this [*holds palms of hands far apart*], which they do quite often... [and it was] just two different materials. And then it took half the CD before they actually went “Whoomph!” and came together. And I just remember that moment was quite exciting, and just really funny.

Adding that, “It’s hard to do that, it’s really hard to do”, Heather’s awareness pointed to the importance of differentiating between these stances, and although often superficially comparable in their ‘musical’/sounding outcomes (and not to be confused with unintentional periods of searching and ‘not working’ periods that, to the untrained ear, might sound similar), these three possibilities represented important differences in intention between different musicians and musical contexts.⁵³

2. Pre-Planned Rules and Concepts

Introducing yet more conscious and, now, pre-planned elements into their improvising, many musicians also turned to the use of Rules and Concepts, especially in durational and large group contexts. Such concepts were decided in advance of a performance, and prescribed interactional or processual elements aimed at minimising ‘risk’, instead focussing on unified and specific ‘musical’ outcomes that were deemed unlikely to emerge by ‘real’ improvising (or the use of Tricks and Strategies) alone.

Such Rules and Concepts ranged from the use of stopwatches (or egg timers) to limit the duration of a performance, to more developed concepts which defined specific musical materials and limited their deployment, and this section looks at these practices in both small and large group contexts.

Small Group Music

Just as bringing about change and freshness was one of the most important motivations for the use of Tricks and Strategies, Rules and Concepts were also considered to be a

⁵²See p. 200.

⁵³As Yorgos Dimitriadis pointed out, the difference could be fine, “I could accept and like something that sounds like two or three parallel lines, going each next to each other, but as a concept... that’s really something you stick to. [...] I’ve also been at concerts, where this is not the concept, or I would feel there should be more interaction, [but] there is none, and that makes me desperate.”

means of avoiding habits, ‘licks’ and clichés, as well as creating specific musical outcomes that would never have emerged otherwise.

As Clayton Thomas explained, pointing to the fact that it was unimportant to him, whether or not this was still termed ‘Improvisation’:⁵⁴

It doesn’t matter to me, necessarily whether I’m improvising or not... because actually The Ames Room doesn’t improvise, we play a process, but the process frees us up from our own tricks, and so maybe I’m improvising *more* because I’m... less aware of what’s going to happen. [...]

I’m going to put you on another planet and see how free you are [there], as opposed to, “You’re free to do whatever you want” on the same planet all the time.

Working within such processes and restrictions meant that focussed aesthetic/‘sounding’ results could be achieved that would only rarely emerge as a result of ‘real’ improvising (with the nebula of possibilities that this entailed). For Nils Ostendorf, this meant ‘improvising’ a 15 minute crescendo,⁵⁵ or:

To find combinations of sounds... to melt into one sound... [and to create] overtones... trying to find combinations of sounds that make the sound really big.

He described how, in a duo concert with fellow trumpeter Louis Laurain:

We even figured [it] out a bit... [that] for the first five minutes we’re going to do *this* and *this* and *this*. We had like three things we did.

And, in each rule or concept, some elements were fixed in advance and others not, Ostendorf’s crescendo representing a good example whereby for 15 minutes the rate of change of dynamics and intensity was pre-determined, whereas pitch, timbre, articulation and other choices of musical material were left for the performers to decide in real-time. Others chose to fix different elements,⁵⁶ and Michael Thieke (in the group The Pitch) decided that:

What we fix is the [tonal] material, so we have these pitch sets, which are usually four notes, and... we go from this pitch set to the other and there might be overlapping periods between the two, but it’s the idea to keep them really separate. [...]

These pitch sets are actually transposed structures. So one of them, transposition zero would be ‘C’, ‘C#’, ‘E’ and ‘F#’... then this structure,

⁵⁴This entire discussion of different levels of improvising of course already falls into the wider discussion of more- or less-improvised (or composed) musics (see p. 55 and section 8.1).

⁵⁵See p. 115.

⁵⁶Curiously, somewhat in reverse to the evolution of Free Jazz from jazz, where musical structures were broken down and used one-by-one (see Joe Harriott’s quote in the footnote on p. 31).

[is transposed by a] minor 2nd, or minor 3rd... transposed [through] every 12 notes, and then there's the inversion, and that's the only material we use.⁵⁷ [...]

Going back from transposition zero to inversion 10 [for example]... that's the piece. [...] So that these fields seem to move slowly from one set to another. [...] You can [improvise] within these changes... stay on one note, or... go [with] the changing colours.

Or the other thing that we fix, usually, is the way we use [the pitch sets], so we... name them like 'frozen'... or 'liquid', to have a certain type of movement or space.

'Frozen' is... very very slowed down. Almost like drone music but not with the idea to do a drone, but at least a very slowed down melody, that is basically long tones. And this 'liquid' would be more like [Morton] Feldman⁵⁸... not the way he repeats, but more these little phrases that have like a melodic phrase character.

Whilst many, like Ostendorf and Thieke, used Rules and Concepts literally during concerts, Chris Heenan described how, for him, such devices simply created options for performance. Heenan told me that with some groups he rehearsed Concepts and Rules in private, and, talking about rehearsals with fellow saxophonist Paul Roth, his intention was that these concrete experiences could then be drawn on later, as the moment demanded:⁵⁹

[During rehearsals] there were times when we were like doing this really... super-close beating material... [and there were] crazy overtone things happening. I actually recommended that we practise, and when we practise, we practise little modules, and then when we play... we play whatever. [...]

Then you have this 'module memory'. I mean modules like "OK, you're playing this multiphonic, I'm playing this multiphonic... let's try that and practise it a few times", and then maybe it'll come [in the concert], but maybe not.

And if it comes, you know you can get into that... it's like building blocks - you *can* make this if you want. Or you *can* use that to jump to go to

⁵⁷Thieke described, again, how a good concept could force old habits out, "That was I think more or less Koen [Nutter]'s basic idea, because he was working on these pitch sets for his own improvising, [to] just have some tone material that's different from playing either completely atonal, or tonal in a way that you have major or minor. [...] These pitch sets, they avoid that you can clearly say that it's a tonality."

⁵⁸We specifically discussed the piece *Patterns in a Chromatic Field*.

⁵⁹As well as to establish the 'field' of a group, to explore possible constellations, and establish 'good' combinations of musicians, this was one of the main functions of rehearsing Improvised Music, especially in long-running bands. Other groups, and especially 'real' improvisers, however, often refused to rehearse or discuss the music verbally at all.

something else.

Large Groups and Improvising Orchestras

Finally, as regards Rules and Concepts, attention now shifts to the large group context, where the field of possibility was generally deemed too large for ‘real’ improvisation alone,⁶⁰ with Andrea Neumann (of Splitter Orchester) summarising that, in this case:

Other bad things can happen then when it’s completely free. [...] People just play because they don’t want not to play - they think they *have* to play.

Anna Kaluza, of the Berlin Improvisers Orchestra (Ber.I.O.), agreed:

I don’t think it sounds so satisfying - it’s just too messy. We just don’t do it well enough I think, the really free improv. I think it can be learnt, but... people really *want* to play, and it’s just almost like 20 people just practising for themselves sometimes.⁶¹

And, while Splitter Orchestra and Ber.I.O. differed considerably in their aesthetics,⁶² and ultimately found different solutions to this common problem (Splitter with Rules and Concepts, and Ber.I.O. with Conduction),⁶³ the problem of improvising in a large group was the same, Kaluza adding that:

It’s also interesting, at the beginning I thought actually it probably could feel very relaxed in such a large group, because... you’re somehow protected by the surroundings - it’s not so much about the individual... and isn’t so influenced by the mood of the day. But it’s not true. It’s just as fragile. Initially I thought it would be more stable because there are so many people... but it isn’t solid. Maybe [it’s] even more fragile, because all these difficult personalities are there together, and have real problems!⁶⁴

⁶⁰See Anna Kaluza’s comments on p. 197.

⁶¹She added, however, that, “I think there is a quality about that [though]... even just the energy of 25 people playing at the same time, a huge Free Jazz group.”

⁶²Splitter is formed of primarily Echtzeitmusik/(Post-)Reductionist/Electro-Acoustic improvisers, whereas Ber.I.O. is comprised of musicians coming from (post-)Free Jazz/European/abstract improvisation. Both listed 24 regular members on their websites [Splitter Orchester, 2015, Berlin Improvisers Orchestra, 2015]. Sadly, a full examination of large ensembles in contemporary Improvised Music, or even a comparative study of Splitter Orchester and Ber.I.O., lies far beyond the scope of this thesis, meriting such a study in itself.

⁶³Conduction is a system of rules and concepts initiated by a series of hand-signals, either from a ‘Conductor’ or by group members. Kaluza learned of Conduction through the London Improvisers Orchestra (see footnote, p. 147), although the term and concept is more widely attributed to American musician Butch Morris.

⁶⁴Occasional Ber.I.O. member, Jan Roder, also contrasted the stylistic breadth of today’s Improvised Music to that of one of the original improvising orchestras, Globe Unity Orchestra, and described how, “At that time, that was very much more narrow, what improvisation means, and this is why they would come together... that was [just] free jazz that they did.”

Biliana Voutchkova (of Splitter Orchester) described how:

We do a lot of exercises and a lot of work [in] pre-concert times, in order really to find each other. [...] When you're in a smaller group... you don't really need so much preparation... but with Splitter it's needed because we all do this small work on a smaller scale, but when we all come together it's bringing all these other little worlds together and they really need to find each other. [...] [Rules and concepts] just make it better, and to make it fresh and to have more possibilities again, that we don't get trapped into doing the same.

Just like Clayton Thomas' description of The Ames Room,⁶⁵ Andrea Neumann told me:

When you have a good rule you can act very free in it. For example there is a rule... it sounds so simple, but it's so effective, when one person changes [material], then everybody has to change in the structure. But it doesn't mean how many people are involved - you don't *have* to play, [and] sometimes just two people can play. [A lot of different things can happen] inside this, with all the improvised skills.

And, once again emphasising the need to change habits and avoid the obvious, clichéd solutions that might otherwise present themselves through 'real' improvisation, Neumann gave a second example, whereby:

We had this rule that Robin [Hayward] came up with that you have an idea to play something, but that you play it thirty seconds later - which changes the music because you don't have these sudden impulses.

The same problem of 'over-playing' and the need to resist impulses was common to Ber.I.O., however, their solution was to develop system of 'conductions', for use at any time in performance. These visual cues, whilst their meanings were pre-agreed, could be introduced in real-time, and Anna Kaluza described how:

Last time, Ricardo⁶⁶ introduced a new sign, which was like a clock... his arm moved like a clock. And with his fingers he indicated how many either long or short notes we were allowed to play during the clock going round. So sometimes it was only one or two... [and] it was great because there was nothing happening - only 'prrrp' [*quietly*] ... [*pauses, silence*] ... 'prrrp' [*quietly again*]. And that's very rare. It would never ever happen without this [conduction].

⁶⁵See p. 206.

⁶⁶Ricardo Tejero is a Spanish reeds player living in London, where Kaluza met him, as well as violinist Alison Blunt, in the London Improvisers Orchestra. Blunt and Tejero often travelled to Berlin to play with and conduct Ber.I.O.

The members of Ber.I.O. had a repertoire of hand signs available at any time, invoking changes in texture, dynamics, material choices and rhythmic features, and these cues could be directed to any number of sections (or soloists) within the orchestra, by any number of conductors. Kaluza added that:

Everyone can be a conductor... it's not about being a leader or dominating anybody - it's more a game... suddenly there is a duo or suddenly a solo. And that just doesn't happen without. [...] It's a problem and a misunderstanding to think now there's someone in front of us, who just wants to show his or her power to dominate an orchestra. [...] It's not the point.. even if you suddenly think this conductor's suddenly conducting too long, you can just go there and you can start conducting as well, and suddenly there are two - anything is possible.

She continued, that:

We all know that if we don't feel well with someone conducting us, or don't like a situation, then we can always rebel... [and] if you think, "Well no, the music seems to want *this* or *that*", then do it! It's OK. We're all still responsible for it. [...] And then... usually afterwards, the conductors say "Yeah, great, it was good when you just joined in without me."

Neither of the orchestras, however, abandoned 'real' improvising entirely, and both juxtaposed Rule- or Concept-based pieces and entirely improvised pieces in performance (Splitter Orchestra also occasionally working with Neue Musik composers).

Members of Splitter and Ber.I.O. agreed that after a concentrated period of rehearsal (ideally several weeks together) and after much work on Rules, Concepts and Conduction, that 'working' 'real' improvisation should be a possibility, but only once group members had 'tamed' their urges to play, a suitable Field had been established, and conventions had been agreed as to the nature of their interactions and aesthetic intentions.

3. Working with Composition, and Improvisation as a basis for Collective Composition

To conclude this Chapter, this section turns towards improvisers who used even more composed (or pre-meditated) elements in their work, with musicians from jazz and (Post-)Free Jazz using written compositions to intersperse their improvisations, and 'performer-composers' from the Echtzeitmusik/(Post-)Reductionist scene creating 'Echtzeit Compositions', in which 'composed' and 'improvised' elements were chosen, explored and mediated in a variety of different ways.

A further example of improvisers' compositional activities, which could equally have been included here, is that of electronic musicians' electroacoustic works, however, owing

to this area's connection to the topic of recording, this subject is explored in Chapter 11.⁶⁷

1. Jazz-Related Composition

For Antonio Borgini, although interested in 'real' improvising (without Tricks and Concepts), a second area of his output used written compositions to achieve musical results which never would have come about through improvisation alone.⁶⁸

In this area, for Borghini, improvisation and composition were considered equal in value but different in quality, and each was used to realise specific musical aims:

I confront the two languages on the same level, and I still think that what you get out of improvisation [is] something that you don't find when the music is written. [...] As improvisers we pay the price of not having any score or written music, but... when it's all written... you will never get the kind of things that happen when you improvise.

Contrasting his work with the larger jazz tradition, he continued:

The jazz tradition, is basically improvising *within* a composition, and what I've experienced [here], is having compositions within the improvisational process... the other way round.

Inspiration for composition came from several sources, and compositions were not aesthetically limited, even within one group or performance. Christian Lillinger pointed out that:

It can be everything - a bit from jazz, a bit from new music, but actually it's just about moving between composed music and improvised music. That means that what we're doing is just not to totally notate a complete work.⁶⁹ [...] [Instead, we are] looking for atmospheres and moods that make good starting points for improvisation, if we compose at all.

He continued that, in his own group, *Grund*:

There are songs, and clearer things, but these are only helpful in terms of arriving somewhere, or finding a quick consensus in the band. [...] We improvise pretty manically, so... it's good to have both.

It was also important for Lillinger that composition created focus and enabled him to realise musical outcomes that would not come about through 'real' or even Conceptual

⁶⁷See p. 251.

⁶⁸This area of Borghini's work could be heard with Tristan Honsinger, *Die Lange Schatten* and his own group *Manunkind*. See p. 184 for more on Borgini's 'real' improvising.

⁶⁹The term 'work' was used loosely, not in a strict musicological sense.

improvisation, and he wrote music with specific individuals in mind, not to be repeated (or ‘retrieved’) by ‘any old’ saxophone player or by classical musicians.

Most improvising musicians also invited their colleagues to contribute their own creativity to the realisation of their compositional works, and reeds player Uli Kempendorff described how:

In my group, the material is much more songs and everything, but I choose players who will destroy and ‘slash-and-burn’ everything. [...] I still want to expose it to that. [...] I don’t call Jonas Burgwinkel,⁷⁰ but I call Oli Steidle... because I want all these elements.

Describing his colleague and friend, Tristan Honsinger, Tobias Delius added that:

[Tristan is] of a very strong mind, and... his pieces are very strong... [but] I think he works best when there are people on stage, who, although they might try to understand him and... try to comply with his wishes, at the same time that they have a mind of their own.

And, even though compositions were now involved, music-making remained a collective process and individual voices could still be heard, Michael Thieke explaining how even in his most jazz-orientated work:

The lack of hierarchy in collectives is something I really enjoy. With some exceptions. [...] If it’s clear somebody writes the music, and also has this idea and wants to realise it, then if I like the basic material... I’ve no problem to have that part of the decision out of my hands.

Still, I wouldn’t like a band where I couldn’t tell my opinion... I wouldn’t play in a band where I would need to fake something to fit into the music. So in a way, still these bands have a collective feeling to it because the final decision [of] what to do remains a collective decision, and it’s not like the bandleader says “It’s done this way, even if they don’t like it.” That wouldn’t work for me.

For many, ‘accurate’ realisation of their compositions (or any idea of *Werktreue*) was far from their aim, and Rudi Mahall delighted that:

When I write a composition I write pretty basic stuff... and I’m always happy when it sounds different!

Adding that, in one concert of a Berlin-based 9-piece band, “It was great, because nobody actually played what was there on the page!”, and telling me that this related to a deeper philosophy of music-making inspired by a first-hand encounter with John Cage, when Mahall was aged 18 (“Cage would have been happy, when something happened

⁷⁰A young drummer based in Köln and well known in the German jazz scene.

that he didn't intend at all"), he described how:

There was a big Cage concert... they played the piece for radios and loudspeakers. 5 radios... [and] I was lucky enough to sit directly behind Cage. He was in the middle of the audience, and I sat behind him, just by chance.⁷¹

And then they began, they were tuning the radios, and something or other was coming out [*makes detuned radio noises*], and some *Schlager* music⁷² from time to time, and somebody was reading along out of the newspaper. And Cage just sat there, and I was watching him the whole time. [...]

And the first members of the audience stood up, furious, and "Bom bom bom bom bom!" [*mimics the sound of an audience stomping out*]... "Shit!", "Terrible!", throwing the door open, and banging it shut... "What is this crap?!" and so on. And I thought it was terrible, because I found these people's emotions horrible, that they couldn't just be quiet, or if they weren't enjoying it, just to [go out] quietly. [...]

But Cage was watching it, and found it fantastic! Because "Whaaaa!"... "Bom bom bom bom bom!"... he could separate the sound itself from the emotions and intentions behind them. He wasn't stupid, he knew they hated it. But he didn't give a shit. He enjoyed the slamming doors and the 'singing' [of people complaining] so much, that he just factored it into his composition, and was listening to the whole thing. Unbelievable!

In Practice

In practice, just like for Mahall, the emphasis was not always on perfection when many of Berlin's jazz-based improvisers performed compositions. Steve Heather described how, in the trio *Booklet*:

We also have all of these songs that we've worked on, from all over the place,⁷³ but the idea is just we go on stage and just play. [...] If someone brings one in, you can join it, or you can counterpoint it. And in a way, aesthetically for us, the less slick it is the better, because we don't want to be clever. It's not about being clever, it's about being musical. [...]

It's exciting to hear... if Toby or Joe's bringing in something... [and] you choose how you want to never-get-your-way-to-where-you-wanna-be in that song.

⁷¹Mahall described this without irony!

⁷²German popular music.

⁷³As well as original compositions, the possibilities also included Jimi Hendrix and several Duke Ellington numbers.

Delius agreed, and showed how his realisation of each composed piece varied in response to the preceding improvisation:

[With] the method we use... we don't know exactly when they're going to come in, or *if* they're going to come in. [...] It's not like we say, "This tune, we're just going to play nice and sweet", we don't make that decision.

And this interpretational freedom allowed such musicians, who were mostly working without pre-planned setlists or pre-conceived structural ideas, to arrive in each composition together, not at all, or to sometimes leave one person to play a melody or bassline, while others continued to improvise.⁷⁴ In the case of *Booklet*, these pieces (or snippets) were written down in a childrens-style manuscript book that also served as their album cover, and for Delius' quartet, these fragments were mounted on A3 pieces of cardboard - both approaches facilitating immediate access whilst improvising.

Again, the role of pieces was not directly to provide materials for improvisation, but to break habits and provide new colours within the existing Field of a group, and Delius added that:

We found out... [that the] improvisation... *does* lead to some kind of comfort zone, [and] the pieces actually worked as a way to break it open. [...] A lot of times in Improvised Music you have the pieces as the factor to create some kind of order or sense, or to direct, but for us it was like the pieces were actually there to disrupt events. [...]

You have this natural physical energetic way with Han [Bennink] being there, also with Tristan [Honsinger]... [and] these pieces... force us to hold our instincts, and... disturb the flow of our energetic improvising, but at the same time they bring in this surreal quality of some idea of a whistleable tune or something, a bit lopsidedly somehow.

I'm quite fond of that idea of not having the composer impose his vision of order on the improviser, but more like the composer or composers throwing in material to make even more confusion than what's there already, let's say.

[Because of] our dispositions, and... having Han as a completely loose cannon with us, of course, none of the pieces are really played 'properly' - we messed them up, or came in [wrong]!

Before proceeding to look at 'Echtzeit Composition' and the use of pre-meditated compositional materials in the Echtzeitmusik/(post-)Reductionist scene, however, one last practical point is necessary here, from the point of view of several musicians who implied that working with compositions had increased commercial potential in the international jazz scene. Many thought that working with compositions would

⁷⁴Essentially, these choices represented the same reactive choices shown from p. 202 onwards, in this case, also including pre-composed elements.

lead to more performance opportunities (especially outside of Berlin), and others thought that such ‘fragments’ or ‘snippets’ would facilitate the listening experience of audience members who were intimidated by more ‘risky’, abstract or ‘real’ Improvised Music.⁷⁵

2. ‘Echtzeit Composition’, the Performer-Composer, and Collective Composition

Already in the case of Rule and Concept-based improvising, and the use of Tricks and Strategies, it should now be clear that all of the musical practices discussed in this study lay along a continuum of ‘improvised’ and ‘composed’ elements, with some choices made in advance and others realised in performance.⁷⁶

Through the mediation of ‘improvised’ and ‘composed’ elements, emphasis could be transferred from interactional/processual freedom to ‘musical’/aesthetic ‘success’ (also in the sense of guaranteeing specific musical results that never would have evolved through ‘real’ improvisation alone), and in musics related to the Echtzeitmusik scene (and Reductionist, Post-Reductionist and Durational musics in particular) these elements were combined and explored with the greatest freedom - musicians developing performances that seamlessly prescribed (or limited) pitch material, durational or formal elements, whilst leaving other elements to be decided in real-time.

In this final section of Chapter 9 I explore such works, firstly, through the lens of solo performances, and, secondly, through collective compositions which used improvisation as their basis, in both cases, proposing definitions of ‘Echtzeit Composition’ and differentiating this, once again, from the processes and ideals of ‘real’ improvisation.

Solo

Among Echtzeitmusik-scene improvisers, composed (or pre-decided elements) were remarkably common in solo performances, which, in the case of (Post-)Reductionist and Durational players, rarely turned out to be ‘improvised’ in the sense of ‘real’ improvising, or ‘real’ improvising with Tricks and Strategies.

As Axel Dörner put it:

⁷⁵It was also perhaps no coincidence that the best selling recording of any of the musicians interviewed here was the band Monk’s Casino, which featured the compositions of jazz musician Thelonius Monk (see footnote, p. 255).

⁷⁶Even in the case of the case of the most ‘real’ improvising, Andrea Neumann suggested that each musicians’ repertoire of musical materials constituted a “compositional element” (p. 155), and, as Burkhard Beins pointed out, even in the ‘free-est’ or most ‘real’ cases, “putting a group together is an act of composition already”.

A solo concert is just a special situation, because you're alone on stage, and you're only communicating with the audience, and in all the other combinations there's two, three or more people - you also have to communicate with another musician. It makes the solo a little bit special, because you have no inspiration from another musician - just from yourself!

While many jazz/(Post-)Free Jazz improvisers such as Rudi Mahall and Tobias Delius (as well as electronic musician Valerio Tricoli) stuck resolutely to 'real' improvising for their solo performances, however, others used varying degrees of compositional elements in order to create specific musical results and, arguably, reduce 'risk'.

For Mike Majkowski:

Every time I play a solo concert I always have some kind of a game plan, but the way I follow the plan always changes. Or how loose I am with the plan is different from concert to concert. Or [if] I'm able to leave open periods of... chaotic activity and then see where it goes.

For Axel Dörner:

It has a form... [even if] the form is not completely fixed. But basically it's clear... [because] it's not possible to play *everything*, one after the other - [so] there's certain structural ideas I follow.⁷⁷

However, whereas Dörner's plans allowed for considerable diversion according to the mood of the moment (he compared it to a larger-scale version of 'controlled-discontrol'), Majkowski told me that he occasionally enjoyed sticking rigidly to his intentions, telling me about a recent performance where:

This time was actually the first time where I really strictly said, "No, I'm really gonna do *this*."

Continuing, and giving a good example of a personal combination of 'composed' (pre-determined) and 'improvised' elements, Majkowski told me that:

The whole piece only had three pitches. I knew that I would begin with *pizzicato* 'D', followed by high 'D' harmonic with the bow, and a lower 'C#' harmonic with the bow, and that was the first cell that I would repeat. And then, over time I would drop the 'C#', and then just continue with the 'D' *pizz*, and D bow, and that that would last for 10 minutes. That was the first section. [The] second section would be retaining that high 'D', but with *pizz*, and playing an open 'E' string at the same time - "Boom... Boom..." [*sings*]. You know, so somehow, that thread of the high 'D' remains. And then that would last for 10 minutes. And then the last 10 minutes would be

⁷⁷See also p. 188.

that same ‘D’ and ‘E’, but introducing the ‘C#’ harmonic again. So that was a pretty clear, strict, straight kind of thing.

Similarly, for Andrea Neumann:

Improvised solo concerts I didn’t play for a while. Since almost more than one year, when I have a solo... I play... a sort of composition that works with movement... that’s very set.⁷⁸

And she went on to describe how, nonetheless:

The skills of an improviser are in it, because how you work with the [electronic] feedbacks, [and] there are quite a lot of decisions you have to make, even when the material’s quite clear... how long you have one sound, when the next is starting, if you do it then again, or if you start with another one. [...] I [also] have to listen very very carefully first to produce [the feedback], and also to know then what I want next.⁷⁹

Echtzeit-Composition and ‘Real’ Improvisation

Such decision-making and conceptual work, however, was controversial among many ‘real’ improvisers. Valerio Tricoli described this scene as a “cemetery” [Tricoli, 2010] and told me how, in partially-composed pieces, he missed a “tension [that’s] not really in the music [and a] tension that’s between events”. Like others who were opposed to such developments, he criticised such “formulaic” music with “a very small palette of possibility [and] a lot of dogmatism”, and also questioned how such music could be described as ‘improvised’ at all.⁸⁰

By means of an answer, however, none of these musicians really considered this part of their output to be Improvised Music in the sense of ‘real’ improvisation, and described these pursuits as music that “worked with” or “incorporated” improvisation, evolving their own term, ‘Echtzeit Composition’ (lit. realtime composition), to describe these practices.

Burkhard Beins described how:

⁷⁸The piece, ‘Erosion’, was ‘composed’ for Neumann’s ‘inside piano’, mixing desk, sensors that respond to bodily movements, and a pre-recorded electroacoustic ‘tape’.

⁷⁹Majkowski also commented that such restrictions amplified the importance of other decisions, adding that, “then decisions like *when* to drop the ‘C#’ the first time become really huge. [...] Also how fast it’s gonna be... not just how fast the whole thing’s going to be overall... but also the placement of every note... these miniature decisions become huge, monumental decisions. [...] It really blows up these small details, and that’s really interesting to me.”

⁸⁰Tricoli described that, by contrast, “The best gigs we’ve played it was in the most ridiculous situations... Playing outdoor festivals, but then there’s like a storm... and 20 minutes before playing you have to take all the shit... inside somewhere. At that point I can’t set up any more, so while they’re playing I have to set up one thing and just do sound like that, and by the end of the gig the drum set is completely destroyed... [and] I am singing with my head inside the snare drum with like a contact mike.”

For me, improvisation means appreciating and welcoming the unknown and unforeseeable, in contrast to an attempt to achieving something one already thinks he knows, or one has thoroughly thought out beforehand. In that sense, all areas I'm working in involve improvisation to a certain degree, but usually it's a combination of both [improvisation and composition]. [...]

Nowadays I would want to use the term 'Improvised Music' exclusively for a musical praxis which is predominately in favour of ad-hoc meetings and all the challenges coming with it, which can be great. [However,] hopefully as a result of this process of theoretical differentiation currently flourishing within our circuits, 'Improvised Music'... can become a term distinct from another term for a different musical praxis of long-term groups using a combination of improvisational and compositional elements - maybe something like 'Echtzeit composition'. Subsuming it all under 'Improvisation' seems too unspecific to me.⁸¹

'Echtzeit Composition', in most cases, was synonymous with the idea of the 'performer-composer',⁸² and the resulting pieces were mainly specific to the performers who conceived them. It was only very rarely that such pieces were intended to be repeatable or 'retrievable' by other musicians, and, as Beins told me:

Just now, a friend of mine, a drummer from America, was sending me emails like "Oh, I've seen you're doing this installation thing again",⁸³ and... he was asking me "Could you imagine that I could do it? If you could teach me to do it, and I perform it?". So that made me think about it, does that really make sense? And now I answered him, [that] doing it again in the Quiet Cue performance... really made me aware that this is so connected to myself, to my person, that for me it doesn't make sense to find a way to teach it to somebody else, or to fix it in a notation... and to say "at this moment..." and then "at 30 seconds you change to that"... "and then with this kind of pressure". [...]

That's something different, [and] that's not what I'm interested in. [...] You can't disconnect the production of the sound and the sonic result and the aesthetic results from me doing it.

Accordingly, and with authenticity rather than retrievability as the motivating factor for the creation of such work, few 'Echtzeit Compositions' were notated or written down,

⁸¹He added, "On the other hand I can see why the early improvisers [coined] the term Improvised Music. It was exactly this aspect of what they were doing that was so different to almost all academic contemporary music. It made a lot of sense back then to emphasise this, because they wanted to draw a musical, and also a political distinction, to this established hierarchical music system. But nowadays it doesn't make so much sense to me anymore, to still continue this old fight."

⁸²See p. 50.

⁸³Beins had performed his installation/Echtzeit Composition 'POR' in Quiet Cue, the weekend before our interview.

and Andrea Neumann added that:

I don't need it. I just need to know where [to put my] pickups to produce the feedbacks, which channels, how much [gain/level], things like this. But I could, of course, make a score out of it.

Contrary to traditional conceptions of composition and the accompanying concept of Musical Works,⁸⁴ Beins added that, "Not writing something down doesn't exactly mean not composing" [Beins et al., 2011b, 140], and others clarified that what they did write down functioned only as an *aide memoire*, not as a score that others could interpret or use to arrive at the same musical conclusions.⁸⁵

Collective Composition

Perhaps the most striking example of the use of scores for memory purposes, and a good example of a second form of Echtzeit Composition (with fixed compositions arising from collective improvisational processes), was Michael Thieke and Kai Fagashinski's clarinet duo *The International Nothing*, whose notations were (quite deliberately) incomprehensible to anyone other than themselves.

Thieke was not sure if Fagashinski could even understand his scores and, typical of many, the duo evolved their own notation system, specific to their needs, which used unconventional fingerings (for multiphonics), verbal instructions, durations and graphic elements.⁸⁶

Thieke described how (not dissimilarly to Majkowski's experience of recording himself and selecting what he found to be most interesting),⁸⁷ the pieces came about through recording, and "playing little snippets, [and] then putting the good versions of it together". And he added, showing how these pieces developed over time, that:

For 4 years, or 3 years, we worked on this stuff, really intensely... [and] it took us a long time always to write these pieces, [and] to record them. The pieces got a lot more detailed by playing them, so when we first recorded them, we'd never played them live, so then the first record came out and only after [that] did we start to play live. And then by playing concerts,

⁸⁴See p. 72.

⁸⁵Although this mainly occurred after my fieldwork period, in late 2013/2014, the concert series 'The Sound of the Second Hand Clapping' (at Labor Sonor) asked such questions as, "What happens if pieces of Echtzeitmusik are transcribed, and find an interpretation by others?", proposing that musicians transcribe their improvisations, and that these improvisations are then interpreted by other musicians from the Echtzeitmusik community [Labor Sonor, 2013].

⁸⁶Examples of Thieke's scores are given in Appendix D. See [Fagashinski, 2011] for more on the history and evolution of the duo. Such text- and graphic-based scores (although these were intended for wider use, and were mainly the product of one author) were also typical of the Wandelweiser Group (see p. 128). Several musicians involved in Echtzeit Composition (Thieke, Lingens, Majkowski, Lucio Capece) also interacted with Berlin's Wandelweiser community (Koen Nutters, Johnny Chang).

⁸⁷See p. 175.

those pieces got actually a lot better, but also the pieces then we wrote got a lot more detailed. [...] We had these general topics, which was like a search for ‘beatings’, [but] now there’s a lot of little variations on these things.

Biliana Voutchkova compared this process to her work in the dance world:

[This] is also a way that dancers work a lot more than musicians I think. And I think this way is really... the way to go, even purely musically. [...] You find material just improvising... you somehow shape it in some way, and it could become a piece. [...]

You’re researching, and you don’t know yet what you have. And in order to find it, you have to talk about it. [...] You say “OK, this is what happened in this moment when I was next to the wall, this is what I felt, this is how it felt”. Then you write it down. [You] look at it, and then you collect all this information and then a certain clarity appears. Then it becomes really clear that it’s working, or it’s not.

For Thieke, the process was no different to any other compositional process, however, he pointed out that the main differences between this method and more traditional forms of writing were that, firstly, in this case there were several authors instead of one, and, secondly, that here, the creative steps were executed in a different order:

I think also in composition there’s a lot more improvisation than people would like to admit - even those ones who have really strict systems of composing. [...] The improvisation happens during the composing process [but] instead,⁸⁸ improvisers compose in the moment, but still with some material that is pre-conceived. I think that’s very close to each other, [and] it’s just the meaning of time or maybe the function of time in the process is different. [...] Certain things happen at a certain different point of the whole process, looking back from the [perspective of the] product, the concert [or] the recording.

⁸⁸He added elsewhere that this was like “a very slowed down [process] of trial and error.”

Chapter 10

Listening to Improvised Music

The insights provided in previous chapters as to how improvising musicians collect and assemble their materials, and the various ways that these are combined in practice, should already serve as a substantial aid to anyone wishing to demystify Improvised Music practice. Attention now turns from the creation of Improvised Music to its consumption, however, and this Chapter deals with live performance and the next with its recorded forms (and the importance of the visual).

Beginning with a proposition of two basic listening strategies for approaching Improvised Music performance (the ‘Emic’, the ‘open’ work),¹ and an evaluation of the difficulties inherent in the concepts of ‘open ears’ and ‘letting go’, there follows a discussion of many of the listening strategies that musicians identified as a means of understanding their work. I suggest a range of possible listening conventions that should be understood and differentiated between in developing an ‘emic’ understanding of Improvised Music, and the third and final part of this Chapter goes yet deeper into musicians’ intentions, exploring the social and political views of today’s Berlin improvisers, examining the ways in which this influenced their music-making, and re-evaluating the ideologies of 1960s first-generation improvisers from a contemporary perspective.

10.1 Two Stances on Listening: The ‘Emic’ and the ‘Open’ Work

Two quite contradictory stances on listening and ‘how to listen’ to Improvised Music emerged over the course of fieldwork: the first, the ‘emic’, requiring the listener to (re-)construct the work as closely as possible to its creators’ intention, and the second,

¹The term ‘emic’ is used in the same sense as in Chapter 4, and throughout this study, to define an understanding of Improvised Music practice which is the same as that of the music’s creators. ‘Emic’ and ‘open’ are my terms, and were not used by musicians and listeners themselves.

the ‘open’, allowing (and encouraging) the listener to develop an entirely subjective interpretation of that work.²

From the first group, and in an attempt to reconstruct what was going on in the minds of performers, Olaf Rupp compared this challenge to encountering Salvatore Dalí’s installation *Mae West*, describing how:

It’s a room. There’s a sofa and there are two paintings on the wall, it’s nothing special. But there’s one lens, at a certain point, and if you go there and look at it... you see the face of Mae West. The sofa is her lips, and... it’s her! [...] For me, [this is] a very good image about... how different people see the things. Some other guy can come in and... would look at the same thing from another perspective, and he would say “Well, what’s this Mae West thing here? There’s no Mae West here! It’s nothing.” [...]

I think every music, [and] especially this very individual music in the Improvised Music scene... has this certain point of view where it functions, where it works. And if you look at it from a different point of view, it just totally doesn’t work at all.

Adding that he felt that both musicians and journalists should take this point more seriously, Rupp described the role of the listener as:

To find yourself this point where it works, and also to help other people to find this. Then you can judge it more, from this point of view. If I listen to the music of Axel Dörner... from a certain perspective it works perfectly, but if you listen from the perspective of country music or whatever, then it doesn’t, of course. It’s so obvious.

One of the strongest opinions on this matter came from expert listener David Diaz, who compared his work as a formalist art critic to his approach to listening:

I have to... develop a certain sensibility... to realise when the performer in question is trying to go into one direction or in the opposite... to invite me or to provoke me. [...] I have to be aware and I have to be active, and I have to discover it, I have to *realise* it. [...]

Otherwise... I come to the concert with myself and my own approach, and that’s... very narcissistic. [...] I have the responsibility of doing my role as a public well. For me it’s a personal issue, that I have to be as good as possible... [and] when I fail to do that well, I feel totally miserable. [...] My job is actually to try... to decipher what are the co-ordinates actually active in the work itself.

²The term ‘Work’ is used loosely throughout this Chapter, deliberately avoiding the question posed in Chapter 3, as to whether Improvised Music performances constitute ‘Musical Works’ in any strict musicological sense.

Several other musicians and listeners, however, provided an equally valid antithesis to Rupp and Diaz' 'emic' listening, instead insisting that the listener should be free to make what they wanted of the music. For such musicians, the 'trace' that they left as improvisers was 'open' to subjective understanding and scrutiny, and such performers were generally unconcerned as to whether the listener was having a different experience, or developing a different understanding to their own.

For such musicians, this was the beauty of Improvised Music - an inevitability of communication that they were not even trying to overcome, and as Burkhard Beins described:

I'm happy if people hear their individual version of it, and I'm sure that every listener hears other aspects and doesn't hear certain things which the neighbour hears. [...] I think you *can't* hear everything, [and] everyone has blind spots. [...] Altogether it's a field of different perspectives on a pretty complex process, happening in the moment.

He added:

I think Improvised Music is a music that welcomes this fact, while there are other musics that don't do that, which try to make everyone in the audience hear the same, and make everyone put their firelighter up in the same moment [laughs]. This is not what we want to do! Probably everyone sees the highlight-moment of a piece in a very different spot, [and] that's totally fine.

And Jan Roder agreed:

Some people get aggressive when they listen to it because they don't find a clue - they want to have something that they can hold on [to]. [...] They want to have a love song where they can cry... or [like in] *Breakfast at Tiffany's*... where it goes to major, when the little cat is sitting [there] - "Miaow!" - and then everybody cries! It's a calculation, you can calculate that.

But with [Improvised] Music it's just to open up - and I would say to somebody [who asks] "What should I do if I listen to that kind of music?" [...] "Ja, if you want to, you could go for structure, you could go for *this*, you could go for *that*, but you could just open your mind and let yourself go, and feel what you feel". And then maybe that's the best way to listen to it.

From this point of view, many musicians recalled concerts which they had not enjoyed as performers, but which the audience (perhaps listening through a different perceptual framework) had nonetheless savoured, Axel Dörner summarising that:

What is terrible for one person is maybe good music for the other person, so

this is difficult to decide... Some people come, I thought it was maybe not so good... and they're really enthusiastic and they think it was absolutely great... what shall I say then? Everybody makes his own music - the listener's making the music.

Anna Kaluza pointed out that, even within the same group, there were often "as many opinions as people", and Clayton Thomas described a band in which, "I think we'd all have different answers on whether it even works".³

Clearly these viewpoints leave much to be explored - the question of 'just feeling what you feel', as Roder described it, immediately problematic from a sociological point of view - and before continuing to look at specific listening strategies that listeners employed (whether to create an 'emic' or 'own' perspective on performance), a brief survey of ideas of 'openness' and 'letting go' follows.

'Open Ears' and 'Letting Go'

Given the findings presented in the previous five chapters, it is clear that an appreciation of Improvised Music requires considerable interrogation and re-adjustment of the existing listening strategies of "all well-socialized [*sic*] members" of, at least, our society [Becker, 2008, 46].⁴ Listeners need to be able to draw distinctions between personal and group elements of musical practice, differing (yet interrelated) aesthetics and two levels of improvisational practice (the 'musical' and the 'processual'), as well as relying on an Improvised Music-specific definition of 'Improvisation' itself, and knowledge of a wide range of specialist musics (jazz, Neue Musik, experimental rock, etc.).

Accordingly, and just as performers had often had difficulty with their first Improvised Music experiences,⁵ it was also clear that, rather than mystically (or romantically) 'opening the ears' and 'letting go', it was necessary for all participants in the Improvised Music world to significantly adjust their conventional listening expectations in order to fully appreciate Improvised Music - questioning, extending and discarding assumptions based in popular music, classical music and jazz, in order to construct what Bourdieu describes as a "specific cultural competence".⁶

³See also Axel Dörner's comments on hindsight during 'searching' sections, and Tobias Delius' comments on whether all band members thought something was 'working' (pp. 196 and 202).

⁴See footnote, p. 131.

⁵See Chapter 7.

⁶As Bourdieu points out, this assumption rests on the idea that, "A work of art has meaning and interest only for someone who possesses the cultural competence, that is the code, into which it is encoded", that "The consumption of goods no doubt always presupposes a labour of acquisition... the consumer helps to produce the product he consumes, by a labour of identification and decoding", and that "The aesthetic disposition demanded by the products of a highly autonomous field of production is inseparable from a specific cultural competence" [Bourdieu, 1984, 2, 100, 4]. Without entering into the vast and problematic debate about communication, and communication science, similar concepts are proposed by [Becker, 2008] and [Nattiez, 1990], and I rest my debate upon these assumptions.

Despite this, and as shown above, themes of “letting go”, “opening up” and learning to listen with “open ears” surfaced repeatedly during interviews and fieldwork, and many musicians optimistically related stories about new audience members who came to concerts, and who, as Roder suggested, were able just to “get it” from the “energy”. However, as my findings in section 5.3 showed, where audience members were not musicians, friends or family, the remaining audience-quotient were mainly well-educated people, often in the arts, and therefore, I would suggest, already possessing significantly more cultural capital than the average novice listener.⁷

Much as this might appear controversial to many of the musicians I spoke with in this study (particularly those concerned with an ‘open’ and intuitive relationship to Improvised Music), the next section, in addition to the previous chapters, outlines seven proposed conventions of Improvised Music communication and performance practice – referring to themes already outlined in Chapters 2 and 3, and pointing to the specific cultural competences that, I believe, need to be developed for both ‘emic’ and ‘open’ appreciation of contemporary Improvised Music.

To this end, and in addition to the findings of the previous chapters, this section lists some of the common assumptions that must be let go *of*, and some of the new skills that must be opened up *to* (or accrued) in order to appreciate Improvised Music in the same terms as its creators and connoisseurs, thus enabling the new listener to create a ‘Mae West’ perspective on Improvised Music (whether the same as the performers, or of their own design).

10.2 Conventions of Listening, and Specific Cultural Competences

This section outlines seven areas of listening conventions, showing musicians’ expectations as to how their music might be understood in their own terms (even if they still considered an ‘open’ interpretation desirable or acceptable), and outlining further distinctions between improvisational practices. The importance of visual information in live performance is also central to this discussion (visual cues allowing the listener to ‘place’ sounds, as well as to make assessments of honesty and intention), however, owing to the subject’s relevance to the discourses of recording covered in Chapter 11, I will cover these issues in the next chapter.⁸

⁷See p. 101. The question of whether cultural capital is transferable between disciplines, and the precise relationships of competences in jazz, Neue Musik and experimental rock in relation to Improvised Music practices is, unfortunately, too big for inclusion here.

⁸See p. 244, onwards.

1. An openness to Change

The first point to note in the case of Improvised Music listening (as opposed to most performances of popular and classical music)⁹ is that the listener simply needs to accept a concept of music-making that *is* significantly different every time. Axel Dörner suggested that:

Many people want to hear exactly the same they have on their CD... they just want to hear the same thing over and over - maybe there's not an interest in a change or something in a different possibility, how it could be.

And Antonio Borghini recommended:

We just have to accept that we don't know, and I think this is a great starting point, especially as a listener.

2. Perseverance and the need for Multiple Exposure

As I suggested in Chapter 9, an acceptance and understanding of Improvised Music requires evaluation of both the 'musical' outcome and the interactional/processual elements that generated it (honesty, risk, tricks, concepts, searching). Accordingly, and if this hypothesis is correct, it is only to be expected that new listeners might require several listening experiences before they found a 'good' concert that 'worked' musically, or that they liked aesthetically.

As my 'non-initiate' friend asked me:

Since it's Improvised Music and you never know what to expect... if I pay €10 to get in and today sucks, because the artists don't like each other and they can't play together, [then] the next time I just don't go any more. That's just the way it is.

However, as Biliana Voutchkova put it, as an 'expert' listener of Improvised Music:

You are somehow a witness and also a co-operator in the process, and you don't just go and get some kind of a ready-made product that's satisfying or not - you take the chances as well. [...] It could be the experience of your life, or it could be something that somehow stays a bit like "OK, yeah, fine". But you do this together with the people that create it, because they go through the same. [...] It's not every time... you're high.

Listener Cristina Marx pointed out that:

⁹In classical music and popular music, works are repeated from performance to performance, each time referring to 'known', stable texts (scores, recordings, videos). See section 3.3.

I would always hate it if somebody... who I'm trying to convince about the music, [comes] to a concert and it's just one of the concerts that... just isn't happening. [...] If you come to 10 more of these concerts, you'll see one which is really cool and that will convince you... [but] I don't know many people that would make that effort.

And repeated exposure and multiple experiences helped new audience members not only to find musically 'working' concerts, but to develop a deeper understanding in general - becoming familiar with the breadth and complexities of musicians' different projects and voices (it was not necessary that listeners enjoyed *all* aspects of a musicians' output), and developing the knowledge, ability and context to compare these musical outputs, both in cross-section and over time (just like fans of classical music might discuss the *oeuvre* of a composer).

Visiting a range of concerts also helped listeners to widen their understanding by building personal relationships with performers, Axel Dörner describing how, "If somebody knows me personally it's much easier to have some kind of access to understand my music". And the need for perseverance was perhaps best exemplified by the experiences of musicians themselves, remembering Rudi Mahall's intense difficulty with Cecil Taylor, and the informal educations and trial-and-error listening processes that were essential to almost all of the musicians interviewed here.¹⁰

3. Skill and Virtuosity

Whilst, on some occasions, and especially in the case of jazz-Related musics, Improvised Music practices were overtly virtuosic (fast, dynamic, skilled), on other occasions the demonstration of 'skill' (in such terms) was less evident - many performances of noise- and sound-based, or durational musics, leading untrained listeners to ask, "Can they *really* play?"¹¹

Such scenarios often led untrained listeners, quite legitimately, to question the difference between 'fart' sounds that *anyone* could make, as opposed to those superficially comparable sounds made by performers (who I have already shown to be experienced, skilled and often highly trained),¹² and such problems also lead to questions of intention, and the need to define what 'making a mistake' might mean in such an unconventional context.

For many musicians, skill and difficulty was evidently still important in the popular legitimisation of their music, and Olaf Rupp, for example, noted a greater interest in his work since using his fingers, instead of a pick:

¹⁰See Chapter 7, and p. 137 in particular.

¹¹See pp. 19 and 62.

¹²See Chapter 7 and 8.

If you want to play clusters or chords [with the pick], you have to do this [*makes a fanning motion, clumsily, from top to bottom of the guitar strings, touching all strings*]. And if you do this, to produce a very dense and chaotic cluster, it looks as if you were drunk... I had lot of positive reactions since I play with the fingers.

However, inside the scene, having the ability and control to realise one's creative/musical intentions appeared to be much more highly valued than 'virtuosity for virtuosity's sake', and the 'honesty', breadth and flexibility of musicians' materials was deemed much more important than technical proficiency or the ability to 'wow' an audience.¹³

As a result, and especially for those involved with (Post-)Reductionist/Durational/Abstract music, traditional conceptions of virtuosity were mainly redundant - the use of silence and space, the placement of sounds, the ability to continue and patiently develop an idea and an overarching awareness of form, all emerging as more important qualities when referring to 'good' performance.

In this case, I propose that the virtuosity is still present, however it exists not on the level of instrumental performance, but in terms of flexibility and ingeniousness of timing, the use of Tricks and Strategies to create change, and the creative use of Rules and Concepts, as well as the ability to be 'in the moment', and to choose and manipulate musical materials relative to specific aesthetic aims. In this sense, then, 'improvisational' virtuosity is more an intellectual or mental (as opposed to physical) virtuosity, and, of course, an Improvised Music-specific definition of skill and virtuosity therefore requires a new definition of the concept of a 'mistake' - such mistakes, perhaps obviously, having little to do with the unfortunate misrepresentation of a composer's intent, forgetting the words of a song, or 'fluffing' an orchestral entry.

4. Mistakes

Instead, in Improvised Music settings, and according to Axel Dörner:

A mistake would mean... I intended [to do] something, and something else comes out.

Dörner added, with a smile, that:

But nobody would hear that probably, or very few people, because it could sound like something I did on purpose! [laughs]

¹³Remembering Clayton Thomas' recollection that he was playing concerts before he even knew C Major (p. 144), it is perhaps worth a moment to consider if it is not just as skilled or virtuosic to hold a beautiful *pianissimo* multiphonic on the clarinet whilst circular breathing, to finely tune feedbacks in a mixing desk to create beatings that form a 25 minute piece, or to 'drop' a new pitch into a three note pattern stretched over ten minutes, as it is to play a post-Coltrane-like saxophone solo or a Paganini violin solo? Performer-audience relationships are explored, in more depth, beginning on p. 234.

But he also suggested that such cases could provide important inspiration for the development of the music, seeing the error as affecting the group process and describing how:

The past is there in what I play - I cannot erase it. [...] Like a composer who writes on paper... I have to live with what I played [and] make sense out of this.

In this sense, and in cases of ‘real’ improvising in particular, such ‘mistakes’ were often seen as positive - Dörner referencing the Miles Davis adage that there were no mistakes in jazz,¹⁴ and Jan Roder describing how:

This is very important with improvising - that the sound that happens, is the sound that happens. It’s... impossible to make a mistake, because at that moment, the note is *there*. And then from this moment on, everybody deals with that - what is right now in the room.

Valerio Tricoli gave the following example, showing how such ‘mistakes’ were often also catalysts for the evolution of new musical structures:

I do a lot of things I don’t want to do, [and it] happens all the time. In the concert the other day there was like this huge feedback coming again and again, and I didn’t want it in the first place. I didn’t want it in the second time that I heard it, I didn’t want it the third time. And the fourth time I was like accepting it. It was like, “OK, we have this thing.” And I was trying to cancel it, but in the dark I couldn’t really understand where it was on the tape, to cancel it with my magnet. [...] I was always missing, and then I was was like “Why should I cancel it?!”. That’s the piece, man. And then it went on 5, 6, 7, 8 times, and I was like “Here it comes again!” [laughs]. And it was alright.

Aside from those who capitalised on unintentional ‘mistakes’, however, there was also a school of musicians who positively encouraged such occurrences, introducing elements that sounded like mistakes (even though they were deliberate) or deliberately playing ‘badly’¹⁵ in order to create particular musical effects. Chris Heenan explained how:

If you’re the Dutch you just let it hang out there! “Phweeeeer!” [*makes a loud high belching sound*]. You just let it fucking hang out there! This dirty napkin on the floor. [...] Ab Baars would be a good example, playing with ICP. [...] It’s like “The mess - let’s just examine *that*.”

¹⁴ And various popular assumptions that run along the lines of “Once is a mistake, twice an arrangement, three times it’s jazz”.

¹⁵ Delius’ example of starting to play without warming up was a particularly good example (see p. 180), and Heenan attributed this attitude to the Dutch school of Han Bennink and Misha Mengelberg (see p. 39).

And he compared this to the work of visual artists Martin Kippenberger and Albert Oehlen:

It's *about* being flaccidly awful, overdone, retarded, and "He has skill and he doesn't apply it, or he *does*?" [...] You're like "Why's it wrong?". And then you realise maybe it's not wrong, or it's wrong because of *this*. And then you realise that your value system is correct, or skewed, or not... it's a good way to judge things.

However, whilst many musicians pointed to the fact that sounds or techniques that came out 'wrong' could have a positive influence on a group situation (and propel the music in new, unforeseen directions), there were also 'mistakes' which were not considered so kindly.

Olaf Rupp described how destroying certain 'directions'¹⁶ or tensions could lead to 'musical' failure, adding that:

We all know... it's a great situation when you have established tension... it's gorgeous [and] somehow this is the essence of the magic of improv, when you reach this... [but] sometimes I realise in other situations you do the same stuff and it doesn't work.

And, similarly, in the case of Rule- and Concept-based improvising, departing from the concept (not following the 15 minute crescendo, playing a pitch outside a cell of pre-determined melodic materials, or not waiting 60 seconds before playing the idea you first thought of) could also be classed as a non-desirable 'mistake', Valerio Tricoli describing how:

You have four horns... [and] their improvisation is making beatings over a sharp note. And then [if], by playing clarinet, at one point it [squeaks], because he can't hold the circular breathing - that obviously sounds like a mistake. [...] It's not that then he does this and... then somebody else is going to react to that.

5. Conceptions of Sound

A further set of distinctions and specialist listening strategies emerging from fieldwork related to the question of sound and meaning, with musicians and 'expert' listeners suggesting four main modes of listening, which applied directly to the intentions of different individual musicians and group contexts.

The first category, 'literal' listening, was the intention of relatively few musicians. JD

¹⁶The term 'directions' is used in the sense of Voutchkova (see p. 185). Rupp also described that mistakes could lie in decisions made before performance, such as going to the sauna (meaning his nails would be too soft to play).

Zazie, for example, preferred that her field recordings remained recognisable to her audience,¹⁷ and Andrea Neumann occasionally performed in a project, in which:

We do this movie, and we make a little bit fun about this - we were pretending to be women from the 30s who listen with two-metre-long hearing aids to the nature. [...] Then we pretend to sound like water, or like the tree, or like herbs, or like the sky.

However, despite its scarcity among practitioners, this mode of listening was more common, and often the first point of reference, among (non-expert) listeners, and there was not one musician I interviewed who hadn't experienced an audience member coming to them after a performance with tales of a 'film', visual analogy or narrative that they had imagined during the concert.

Whilst this was, of course, quite acceptable for musicians who encouraged an 'open' interpretation of their work, even for these performers such imagery was rarely their intention, and, as Matthias Müller explained:

I don't hear things like this. I don't hear raindrops when you play [*makes popping air sounds noises*]. [...] Sometimes people come after concerts and say "Oh yeah, when you played this... I really saw a wood... I saw a forest in front of me and the winds coming through the trees", and... I accept it... they take something. But I don't think about it at all really, and I never, when I'm listening to someone... think about things like this.

Instead, Müller asserted that, for him, "Sound is Sound", and implied that such musical materials should be heard free of any association, somewhat in the manner of John Cage. Cage, as in the 1960s, was important to today's improvisers on two main levels: in accepting any sound as musical material and proposing that these sounds (if not all sounds) should be heard and appreciated free of their everyday context, source and meaning.¹⁸ And, as Andrea Neumann explained, aside from the film project above:

I'm definitely influenced by Cage's philosophy - especially that any sound is an interesting thing to listen to, [and] that [there's] not 'Music'... and that the other things are just noises... but that everything can be included and can be an interesting thing.

And Klaus Kürvers described how:

Our ear is only trained to recognise what it knows, and the main role of our ears is to shut out disturbing sounds and to focus instead on what one wants to hear. I always say that there's a secretary in the ear who says "No, we're

¹⁷See p. 174.

¹⁸See p. 42, and footnote, p. 70.

not letting that one through”, “That one doesn’t get through to the boss”. She’s sitting at Reception and there’s lots of things she refuses to let in. [...]

In order to listen to Improvised Music, it’s essential that you send the secretary on holiday... You have to listen to what’s happening with open ears... That’s one of the most important lessons from the music of Cage and his theories.

For Olaf Rupp, sending out the secretary (if, indeed, he ever had one) not only took care of noise- and sound-based material, but allowed him to hear pitch-based material free of harmonic function, and for Rupp, even though not a fan of Cage, the same conclusions were reached through his own naïve beginnings and through his work with electronic musicians:¹⁹

Traditional instrument players... always have this [*he sings an ascending and descending major scale, one octave*]. And this is in your brain, and then you have your major chords and your minor chords, and *this* chord and *that* chord, and [so on]. [...] It’s a system of rules... *Überbau*, we call this in German.

[But] lots of electronic musicians, they just don’t care a shit about it! For them everything is audio, so everything is musical material. They record *everything*... and this is a very refreshing aspect of the whole thing. And it is enormously interesting to transfer this attitude back to a traditional, acoustic instrument. [...]

For me the whole [guitar] fretboard was just lots of sound material - there’s no scales, no chords, nothing... [and] I think this is still very strange for many people... sometimes I don’t see myself as a guitar player any more.

In Rupp’s case, with pitched material, even other improvising musicians found this difficult to understand:²⁰

Of course, jazz people, they think “Wow, there’s that chord”, and then they have their ideas [*sings and ascending triad*] and then it’s gone... [but] it wasn’t a chord for me. It was just *that* note, and *that* note, and *that* note... [and] it does not inevitably lead to that next triad which the dogma of the theory of harmony demands. For me, it’s only sounds.

¹⁹See p. 141 for Rupp’s beginnings as a musician and, in particular, the story of the pitchforks. He added that, “I was never a big fan of Cage. We share the same religion, but that’s it”, and described how, “In the 90s, I played a lot of electronic music... first, it was accompanying the guitar, and then it got more and more important... I had bands where I only played this. Maybe one chord from the guitar, and then playing the rest of the concert with the sound material from that”.

²⁰Jan Roder described that, “Olaf plays a lot of those chords, but he doesn’t play them functionally. He plays major seventh chords - he plays [*makes scrunchy textural noise and then the chord*] - but it’s not meant to be a major seventh chord - and that’s the point. It’s not a tonic. It’s nothing like that, it’s a *sound*.”

Whilst Rupp was one of very few musicians with a truly ‘Cagian’ appreciation of sound,²¹ others suggested different modifications of Cage’s stance - the possibility of freeing sound from its associations having opened the doors to focus on interaction and timbre in new and different ways.

Klaus Kürvers, for example, placed emphasis on counterpoint and interplay, and he described how, essential to his own appreciation of Improvised Music:

[You have to] accept that things happen in parallel, that they don’t relate to one another, and that it can be difficult to hear 2, 3 or 4 autonomous processes happening at the same time and then to find enjoyment in that.

He added that:

You do that all the time in daily life anyway - as soon you walk onto the street you notice that there’s somebody walking towards you on the pavement, that you have to watch out for cars. [...] These senses are actually already developed, and you need this sensual awakesness (*Wachheit*) to listen to music too, but in this case it’s aural.

The ear... has to be able to perceive parallel or unpredictable [things]... just like theatre, or even just going to see a football game. [...] In a football game there’s the whole football pitch and these 22 players, and you’re watching them all, asking “What are they actually doing? How are they integrated? What’s developing there? Who’s standing how?”. Listening requires just the same skill as the eyes have when we watch a football match.

Representing the stance of many (Post-)Reductionists and the ‘Microscopic’ attention to the inner minutiae of sound already addressed on p. 48, Andrea Neumann explained that:

A lot of times when you work with sounds and noises, then people say “Oh that really sounds like rain, and that really sounds like water”... [but] I always didn’t want that. I always wanted that people would think, “No - just listen to this, what it is!” [...] It’s about opening completely to the details of sounds. [...] Before I was maybe like into very tiny things and very quiet, and now I also like more massive things, but in this massivity [*sic*] you have also some beatings and all these layers where you can just enter with your perception, and you [don’t] have... to wait for something more to happen. Inside the sound there is a lot to discover when you just listen to it.

Mike Majkowski added that, in his solo work:

²¹ Just as with the supposed impossibility of attaining a truly ‘Cagian’ listening state, Axel Dörner pointed out that, “There’s limitations to the openness. You can be extremely open, but you always try to make sense out of something, immediately.”

I'm trying to create a sense of stillness, or a frozen moment. [...] It's like when you look at the river, and if you just look at it as a whole then you see a river, but if you focus in on one section then you see all these little ripples and all these... things acting independently. [Or] if you look at a Rothko picture... if you step back it's one colour, but if you come up close then you see all these little details in it.

6. Art and Entertainment

A further expectation to be readjusted from more everyday listening practices is that of (necessarily) being entertained by a concert or performance, and, from this point of view, many musicians were quick to berate audiences who weren't 'open' and didn't know 'how to listen',²² one musician describing how:

I remember in Ausland... there were two women there, they were talking while we played... obviously discussing the whole time how bad this is. So they didn't allow themselves to let go for a second and let go, and to say, "OK, I know this won't last any longer than 25 minutes so maybe I give it a try." [...] When they go to the museum they don't expect every piece of art to be for them! But when they go to a concert they just want to be entertained.²³

Chris Heenan despaired at those who went to concerts expecting "immediate 'diddley-diddley' coming out", adding that:

You don't expect that from a novel. You don't expect that from other forms
- why does that happen in music?

And Mike Majkowski commented that it wasn't his intention to make music for "accompanying their day" - instead, and as a direct extension of the establishment of jazz and Improvised Music as a 'serious' art-form, demanding the audience's full concentration and active listening (whether in an 'emic' or 'open' sense).

The majority of musicians refused to play in venues where the public talked, instead, expecting their audiences to sit in silence and make the effort to apply themselves fully to the music, and this outwardly passive, yet internally/intellectually active form of

²²Or, in other words, didn't have the specific cultural competences discussed in this chapter.

²³Klaus Kürvers remembered back to the beginnings of Improvised Music in the 1960s, and, making a parallel to the evolution of Western art music during the 19th Century, told me that, "The audience needed time to understand that. At the beginning, people were used to standing at the bar and then talking louder when the music started. People were only used to hearing this kind of music as background music. [...] New places had to be found for this new music that was so demanding that you had to listen to it. Before [the early 60s] there were only dedicated jazz clubs in Paris [and] Heidelberg... but from the early 60s onwards there were organisations (*Initiativen*) of jazz fans, where they also played records to each other, and who started clubs in cellars and so on, not for dancing, and where the band played to the audience from a stage." See also p. 24.

listening excluded dancing, movement and other forms of overt audience participation. Audiences didn't applaud 'solos' (like in jazz), and there were generally very few announcements and certainly no programme notes, song titles, TV screens or other forms of presentation that fans of other genres might find familiar.

Instead, many musicians aspired, in the words of Hannes Lingens, to "make people think", and set out to create music with the "potential of changing society", Burkhard Beins asking, "Isn't it that creative arts *should* be about that?",²⁴ and Christian Lillinger stating that:

This music is intellectual music, unbelievably intellectual music. Not just like "Hey, you have to play with balls" and that's enough, [but] both of course.

The political and social models on which these intellectual/artistic assertions were often based will be explored in section 10.3, however, to conclude this section, I believe it is important to differentiate between two groups of musicians (purists of this stance, and those who believed that 'fun' and entertainment also had a place), as well as looking at musicians' interaction with their audiences - specifically in terms of whether they were looking to please their audiences or not.

As I will show in section 10.3, much as many performers had some kind of social or political intent underlying their musical practices and considered what they did to be the highest of 'high' art, a second camp also emphasised the importance of entertaining and having fun, in addition to these more 'serious' concerns.

Tobias Delius was convinced that the two were by no means mutually exclusive, describing how:

That's probably the most important thing of it all. [...] [It's not just about] some kind of problem solving... but basically it's just such a pleasure to do it. I'm not playing... to show people like politically we can get on with each other... [although] I think it *is* part of what the music says. [...] But I also think it's a good message to send out that people should maybe worry a bit more about having fun! Or not worry more!!! [laughs]

For Valerio Tricoli, one of the strongest voices on the subject:

It can be fun in the sense of people laughing because it's 'fun'. But fun could be even [pauses] - 'It's entertainment, baby!' [laughs]. I mean, I really think that it has to be entertaining. In many senses.

It can be entertaining conceptually, entertaining for the mind... it can be entertaining because it's very emotional, it can be entertaining because it's

²⁴Beins added: "Very often they are not, because it's more about stardom... or money also, but it should be about that. Art should be about that."

kind-of stand-up comedy in a way, or it can be a mixture of these things. [...] When it's just like this thing where it's like you read the paper first, so you know what the conceptual frame of the piece is, and then you listen to the piece and it's absolutely fucking boring, and it lasts like 40 minutes and you're like "Oh, man, please!" [...] How can I be entertained by *this*?!²⁵

Logically then, this discussion now leads to the question of what musicians' intentions towards their audiences actually were - especially bearing in mind the prevalence of long performances with no breaks, announcements and so on, and where musicians would sometimes face each other to play,²⁶ would often perform with closed eyes (or concentrating intensely on their instruments) and, in many cases, would dress entirely casually.²⁷

Once again, the uninitiated listener might be forgiven for thinking that the musicians were just playing for themselves, the assertion that "They're not listening to each other!"²⁸ being one of the most clichéd accusations repeatedly levelled at Improvised Music performers. This theme forms the final part of this section.

7. Playing for the Audience

Once again, Berlin's improvising musicians fell into three categories: those who played to please the audience; those who played for themselves (and if the audience enjoyed it, that was a bonus); and those who saw no reason why they couldn't play with their audience, fellow musicians and themselves in mind.

Of the third category, Valerio Tricoli was extremely critical of those who performed only for themselves, and, suggesting that this was by no means at odds with doing something that he liked himself:

If I get invited to a place and I go this place and I know that it's a techno club, and I see the audience, in a way I'm going to go like... you know, "Let's entertain these people!". If I go too weird, noisy or harsh they're not

²⁵Tricoli went on, "I can't stand boring stuff. I can't even stand boring movies. A lot of people ask me 'Who is your favourite director?'. And... I always say Steven Spielberg [laughs]. But it's actually because if [they ask], 'Ah, but what about Michael Haneke', I'll go like 'Yeah, I like Michael Haneke'. But I mean what are the movies I like of Haneke? - I like *this* one and *this* one - [but] what are the movies I like of Steven Spielberg?! I mean, *Indiana Jones*, man! Let's talk about *Indiana Jones*. [...] Tarkovsky, I mean - sure, but fuck it! [...] Tarkovsky against *The Shark*? [the 1975 film, *Jaws*]. I mean how many times have I seen *Stalker*? Once. How many times have I seen *The Shark*? One hundred."

²⁶Even in the case of Post-Free Jazz groups with two saxophones, bass and drums it was common to set up in a semicircle, rather than the classic 'horns at the front, rhythm section at the back' formation. I also saw a concert of the Splitter Orchestra where all of the musicians pointed in different directions, not necessarily towards the audience.

²⁷Whilst I initially assumed this to be a convention rooted in the 1968 Brötzmann Philharmonie story (p. 40), hardly any of the musicians I interviewed were aware of this episode - the convention presumably having been handed down regardless.

²⁸See p. 203.

going to get it. And I have many things that I like in myself, and many ways to go to the same thing... that I like, so why making them bored? [...] It's not like I have this one thing which is like, "What I wanna do no matter what, where I'm doing it". [...] It doesn't exist for me.

Axel Dörner agreed, his appropriation of Zimmerman's *Kugelgetalt der Zeit*²⁹ encompassing the idea that:

I'm also a listener while I'm playing... [and I play] for everybody. For myself, for the band and for the audience. To all three of them.

However, others were critical of musicians who gave too much emphasis to their public, Clayton Thomas telling me that:

[One colleague] once criticised me for playing too much for the audience, and I think he's right. [...] I'm a person who plays music because of people. I play music for myself, but I also play music for the connection of people, so I play to the room I'm in.³⁰

Others still, were more stoic about performing their own music, JD Zazie (the opposite of Tricoli) telling me that:

I always play how I want to play... [but] then you take the consequences of that, so you know that maybe people will not like it, you know that people will be very critical about it, or you know that maybe certain people will love it, but you also know that some unexpected people will love it, too.

And Matthias Müller described how:

I wouldn't be human if I didn't really care at all, but... actually I try to leave it out... I'm not playing for the audience, which probably sounds a bit weird. [...] I'm really trying to do something which is worth listening to... but I would never decide things for the audience, for example, or act different than I would when I'm playing in a rehearsal space with someone for the first time... I'm trying not to get too much [influenced] by things from outer space. [...] I'm not playing to give people a good time, but if they have it, then it's even better!³¹

²⁹See p. 188.

³⁰One listener told me that, audiences aside, it was also question of whether musicians adapted to the size and acoustics of each performance space: "There are musicians who play *for* the room, *for* the audience, and are very strongly connected together, and if there's something happening in the audience, like... a little child who doesn't behave, [then] they have the capability of taking the child in. And not being spoilt in their music by the little child. And there are other people who cannot do that. And there are people in the middle... everyone has their own character in that."

³¹Rudi Mahall described how, "The typical German or European attitude is that you say, 'OK, the audience has to understand *me*, not the other way round. I don't have to understand the audience and then offer them something.' The other way round - 'I stand on the stage and then I offer them something, and they will either get it, or not.' "

10.3 Social and Political Stances on Improvised Music

When building an ‘emic’ picture of musicians’ experiences while improvising, or even in suggesting frameworks for an ‘open’ interpretation, clearly the distinctions and conventions proposed in the last section should be taken into account, knowledge of differences in musicians’ intentions towards their audiences and differing listening strategies implying important differences in how an audience might listen to, and make sense of, an Improvised Music performance.

Just as essential in creating the ‘Mae West’ perspective on Improvised Music practices, or ‘allowing’ the listener to know it’s acceptable to form their own opinions, however, the final area missing from this summary of proposed listening conventions is that of political and social intention - the importance of such motivations throughout Improvised Music’s 50 year history, as well as in the academy, meriting a section unto itself.³²

Berlin’s improvising musicians fell into three main categories regarding social and political matters: those with no social/political intentions; those whose ethics and social/political models were transported directly into their music-making; and those for whom their social/political ideologies were expressed not directly in their music, but in their way of life.

Of the first category, Anna Kaluza, when asked if her music was political, answered, “Not at all. For me not”, and, like many younger musicians, another wind player in his late 30s answered that:

[I’m from] quite a bourgeois world. [...] My family was a very wealthy family... and my father expected that I would also become a ship-broker, and it was already like a bit of a rebel thing to do something completely different, doing music.

Trumpeter Reuben Lewis told me:

I’ve never thought of my music to be motivated by politics. Whether or not there is something about why I play jazz and experimental music that has an ulterior political motive I don’t know, but it hasn’t been conscious if it is. I know it’s slack or a cop-out, but being a 23-year-old white Australian with nice artistic parents and a bit of cash saved, I don’t think I have much to complain about yet.

However, whilst the non-political faction appeared to represent a growing trend among Berlin’s youngest improvisers, many other musicians expressed much stronger political and social ideals, and these shaped both their music-making and way of life.

³²See Chapters 2 and 3.

Axel Dörner summarised that, for him:

The music I'm playing implicates of course my ethical point of view... it's transported through this. [...] It's like a virtual world we can explore in and learn out of... to the other world.

And Chris Heenan concurred:

We're also about difference and diversity, and realising that there are different ways to do that, to make things... using music as a conceptual metaphor for how to live.

Defending the role of individual freedom, Burkhard Beins described how his music-making represented:

A relative freedom people can have, and should be aware of... Finding out that *they* are the ones who are defining and deciding their own world they live in, and [that] it's not necessarily so, that you have to follow the mass media and the mainstream, but you can experience that you can be different and that's fine. And it's fine that every one is different.

Tristan Honsinger celebrated the diversity of backgrounds, tastes and ideas that Improvised Music ideally integrated:

It's this kind of exchange of different languages... There's all this political autonomous research that people go through, and the fact that you come together and put your research against, or with, someone else - I think it is maybe what politics *should* be, let's say. That normally it isn't. Because there are so many prejudices and presumptions, and what-have-you.

And when you come together and exchange your experiments... it simply doesn't matter what people think - it's more that you're kind of exchanging some kind of abstract thing, that you cannot put into words.

Rudi Mahall explained that, for him, the integration of the individual and group represented a situation where:

Everyone has an individual point, they make it, and out of that emerges something that would never have been said otherwise. [A point] that's so strong, that you can't say anything more about it.³³

And for many, the emphasis on individual freedom represented a particular form of anarchy, Tobias Delius describing how, "with relatively little infrastructure needed... it's perfectly possible to make something nice together", and Jan Roder, echoing Berendt's comments that the music represented "freedom, and an individuality that relates to the

³³Mahall added that each individual point should, ideally, be "as focussed as possible".

whole, serving the whole”³⁴ agreeing that:

If Improvised Music works really well, it shows a very nice and positive kind of anarchy, where people are doing something together, so-called ‘without rules’, but with kind-of-a humbleness, kind-of-a looking towards each other. Not wanting to [be] “I’m the first” or something, but “We build this now together, we do some music together”. That’s a very positive example of how things *could* work if there’s a little bit less egotism.

Klaus Kürvers went so far to say that:

This social model, which is deeply embedded in the model of a Free Jazz ensemble, is a model for collaboration and team-work... this is how it’s possible to work creatively together without the need for heirarchical structures or the need for a master plan. It’s a flowing process, where common ground will be found. [...] When I make music it’s the realisation of a utopian picture of possible collaboration, on a global scale.³⁵

And the building of such utopias was, evidently, a reaction to the perceived failings of the existing political and social systems within which these musicians lived, Els Vandeweyer describing her feelings that:

We live in such a fucked-up world, and... it’s important to show that it’s possible in a different way. [...] Everybody’s the same... they live in their house, they look television, they all do the same, they eat the same... I think it’s dangerous.³⁶

Such anti-capitalistic, anti-globalistic and anti-standardisation attitudes surfaced time and time again during interviews - in relation to music-making, but also in relation to the choice of a deliberately low budget lifestyle, resistance to institutions and the mainstream music industry, opposition to closing the Tempelhof airfield,³⁷ the destruction of the *Palast der Republik*,³⁸ as well as to widespread CCTV surveillance, standardised car design, and light and noise pollution.

³⁴See p. 34.

³⁵At no point in these discussions was the role of the listener mentioned in such utopian descriptions - the implication being that musicians created such social models between themselves and that the audience should be witness to this process, rather than forming part of it (although this is a subject worthy of further research, especially in relation to the differing stances on performer-audience relations outlined on p. 236).

³⁶She added, “We as human beings, we’re very far away from our possibilities and abilities... we live in a time that we’re made unable [to communicate with one-another]. I know people who spend [so much] time on Facebook that they’re not able to communicate in the normal social way with each other any more.”

³⁷Currently a public park with allotments and bars on the site of the now defunct Tempelhof airport, situated in the centre of the city.

³⁸As Chris Heenan put it, “Don’t tear down the *Palast der Republik*. [...] Especially that building, they should have preserved [it]. This is a weird fucking building, and where it’s located is so weird. [...] It’s a weird anomaly. Leave it... Why do we wanna make Berlin look exactly like Fulda or something! [...] There’s a tendency to make things the same.”

The social and political situation of 2012-13 was, of course, different to that of the 1960s,³⁹ Burkhard Beins pointing out that:

What's clearly different is that [then] it was... more like a black and white thing. [...] There was the Cold War and the opposites were really clear, and it was clear where the enemy was, in all respects. But now it becomes all very unclear and there are so many aspects... it's very problematic.

And David Diaz described how:

Nowadays [what] we name the left, or the radical [left]... it's not any more the same. It changed, because the world has changed. [And] now it has more to do with... the critic[ism] of great narratives, than engaging in opposition against a concrete political regime.

To conclude this section and this chapter, however, one more group of musicians remained: those who, even though their social and political ideals did not manifest directly in their music-making, did represent such ideas in their lifestyle choices - the decision to live on a low budget, to play Improvised Music and to exist (as far as possible) outside of the mainstream, made with the same distrust of capitalism and globalisation as those musicians who put this into their musical output.

For Clayton Thomas:

One of the energy points of me really working so hard as I did when I started playing bass was that it was a counterbalance to... the system I'd worked [in].⁴⁰

And Andrea Neumann described how:

In a way, [to be] political is maybe to go into an area... [where] you will never be really rich, so you decide to live [that] this music is more important to me than to have a luxury life. Maybe within the capitalistic structures we live in it's a sort of statement - it's not so important for me to have a car and a house [laughs].

Michael Thieke also agreed that:

Living a certain thing, and not taking part into [*sic*] certain developments of society by free-will and own-decision, because you want to do something else - I think that's a statement. And also somehow that it's not going for the

³⁹See p. 32 onwards.

⁴⁰His previous employment had been in in advertising, see p 144. Thomas described how, despite his initial attraction to the political aspects American free jazz, and these convictions having been stronger in the past, "I play music for where I am now, and [...] it's not about being anything else. [...] I'm like a street musician [and] you can... attribute political values to it... because it is ideological music, and it's music about the power of individual activity. [...] But it's only in the afterword that we go, 'I can attribute politics to that'."

capitalist part of it - that that first thing is earning money with it and [then to] see what you'll do, but it's more like you want to *do* something and then hopefully you make a living with this... in *that* way I think it's political.

All in all then, for those searching an 'open' reading of Improvised Music performance, these findings may be of little consequence, but for those seeking an 'emic' understanding, such social and political beliefs serve to further elucidate the intentions of the musicians interviewed here. This section establishes that it would be incorrect to describe the scene, as a whole, as 'political' (in many cases, therefore, it would not be worthwhile to search for political intention in musical outcomes), but nonetheless, it identifies the ideologies that underlay the Improvised Music-making of many of Berlin's improvisers, providing insight into the social and political models represented in these remaining cases.

Chapter 11

Recording Improvised Music

To conclude the ethnographic part of this thesis, and to continue with the issues of consumption already begun in Chapter 10, this chapter addresses Improvised Music in its recorded forms, looking, firstly, at the ideological problems of recording Improvised Music, and, secondly, at the solutions musicians used to mediate and overcome these problems.

This second section proposes three different functions of recording in Berlin's Improvised Music scene: recordings for documentation; recordings for release; and recordings for use as a basis for electroacoustic composition, and the third and final section of this chapter looks at the practicalities of recording, in terms of economies, formats, production and the idea of the musician as sound engineer.

11.1 The Importance of Live and the Problem of Recording

On the whole, and doubtless as a result of living in a city with up to 9 improvised concerts each night, few participants in this study listened to recordings of Improvised Music at home, preferring composed musics including 1940s jazz, Neue Musik, 'world' music, electronic music, rock and pop or, quite simply, nothing.

One listener didn't even own a hi-fi,¹ and, on the whole, Improvised Music was considered a live activity - firstly, because the music was often intended just for that particular moment but, secondly, also because it was widely held that visual information was essential to interpretation and appreciation of both the musical and processual/interactional axes of appreciation outlined in Chapter 9.

¹He told me, "They call me Music Taliban. And yes, I don't think the development of recordable music is a good development. 150 years ago, everyone would know how to make a little music. People would play little concerts at home to listen to music... I prefer to listen to less music, but live."

As Valerio Tricoli said, “once you’ve played the note it’s gone”; as Anna Kaluza put it, “a strange thing about this music and these CDs is that tomorrow they’re already old”;² and, as Tobias Delius explained:

I do find it a bit difficult nowadays that you almost can’t go to a gig which is not being filmed or recorded. On the one hand it’s ok, that’s how it is, that’s how the time has gone, but I do find it’s also nice that things live only in your memory... and can’t be checked out on a photo.

Accordingly, and especially in the case of ‘real’ improvising, much concert music was intended just for the present, and, unlike most other musics, the text or ‘work’ realised in performance was never meant to be repeated, duplicated or to have any kind of life beyond the moment of its creation - this ideology suggesting no obvious reason to record it at all.

In addition to this emphasis on the moment, the lack of visual content in audio recordings was also held to be an impediment in recalling the ‘live’ experience, and many musicians suggested that the visual was essential for understanding the processual/interactional elements of performance, and that posture, body language and facial expression provided essential information as to musicians’ ‘honesty’ and intent.³ Here I also recall Anna Kaluza’s description of the Berlin Improvisers’ Orchestra as a “visual funny thing”⁴ and, as one new listener at Ausland commented, with some confusion, “I didn’t know whether to look at their facial expressions or what they’re doing!”.

The visual was held to be important in listeners’ location of unfamiliar noise- and sound-based materials (being able to ‘place’ the origins of sounds was thought to clarify interactions as they took place), and, as Burkhard Beins explained:

The recording is capturing a certain thing, but it doesn’t capture certain phenomenon which were present in the room while doing it.

Steve Heather described the problem from the point of view of listening to Improvised Music as a teenager, expressing his confusion at hearing the extended techniques of drummer Paul Lovens on record and having no idea which of the musicians were making which sounds, and by which means:

A friend of mine gave me this record of the [Schlippenbach] trio... [and] I

²Kaluza added, “I always like this music because the way it’s just played, and then it’s gone, is so unpretentious. There’s no waste. You just play it and the next day you play it differently - but with all these [recordings] suddenly there is a product and a whole lot of waste”. This thought was echoed by Rudi Mahall, who added, of concert situations, that “You’re just left with a light memory, and the feeling of how it was when you played it... and how it was with the others... a very intimate feeling... That means so much to me.”

³This is an area worthy of more research in itself, and some of these aspects will be addressed in Nikki Moran’s forthcoming work on improvising duos (see [Moran, 2013] for an abstract relating to a recent conference paper on the matter).

⁴See p. 197.

didn't know what the fuck was going on!⁵

And consequently, during fieldwork, I saw relatively few audience members 'listening' with closed eyes,⁶ with visual cues providing a variety of suggestions as to the intentions of the performers, and the various strategies and choices they were employing.

⁵By contrast, Chris Heenan described that during a concert: "I'm pretty active. I like to look around and see what people are doing. But I also realise that when things are pensive and the music's really quiet, when it would actually be disturbing to go 'Is *he* making that?'... in that kind of moment I'll just sit there. [...] I'll have the 'tempo' moment, where I'm not looking, and I'll also have moments where I'm really looking around and trying to figure it out."

⁶Although there were a greater proportion listening with closed eyes in (Post-)Reductionist/quiet/Durational settings.

11.2 Three Forms of Recorded Improvised Music

With these limitations in mind, it might be questionable as to why improvising musicians would make recordings at all - the fleetingness of the moment and these ‘uncapturable’ visual/processual/interactional elements already making a strong case against doing so.

But while a handful of musicians did refuse to release their improvised output (Antonio Borghini only produced recordings with compositions under his own name,⁷ and Valerio Tricoli released only as an electroacoustic composer),⁸ others did seek to record and release music that mediated these difficulties to differing extents and to different ends.

Many such musicians released up to 10 albums each year,⁹ and recording was essential to their musical lives, however this recorded activity almost always came with the caveat that it should be considered separately to their live work, that Improvised Music in its recorded form should be approached with another set of expectations and conventions, and that this format should fulfil other musical and social functions.

In this section, then, I use findings from my interviews to propose three categories of recorded Improvised Music, defining their nature, function and usage, and I draw distinctions between:

1. Recordings for documentation, private or archival use.
2. Recordings for public release and for sale.
3. Improvised music as a source for electroacoustic composition.

1. Documentation

As I already showed in Chapter 8, private recording was essential to the practice and development of several musicians and, in addition, Klaus Kürvers (with a record collection of some 25,000 LPs and CDs, and an extensively catalogued digital archive of recordings of the last years of Berlin’s concert scene)¹⁰ argued that such documentation

⁷Although Borghini did appear on some improvised recordings initiated by others, he described all recorded music as a “shadow” of the “real thing”.

⁸Tricoli told me, “I always wanted to do... three things. I wanted to be a composer of concrete music. [...] Be an improviser. And have a sort-of heterodox rock band... like sort-of a weird rock band.” See pp. 229 and 197 for Tricoli’s description of a concert where he was so concerned with the process and interaction that he didn’t even class the outcome as ‘music’.

⁹Axel Dörner, one of the most prolific, told me he had lost count of the total number of recordings he had appeared on, but estimated it to be well over 100.

¹⁰This collection also included his own jam sessions and rehearsals with many of the musicians interviewed here. Kürvers’ sessions, held at his house and often up to 3 per day, were an essential meeting point for musicians of all ages and backgrounds (although focussing more on those related to (Post-)Free Jazz and Abstract/European Improvised Music), and Kürvers was also happy to have

was essential from a historical point of view. Kürvers argued that the very variability of improvised performances was all the more reason to record them, and explained how, for him:

It's a form of remembrance. It doesn't make any sense to record several versions of classical pieces... because there's usually a good studio or radio recording already. It's always more or less the same composition that's being performed... with small differences... but for Improvised Music, each performance is totally unique... [it] happens once, and happens in an instant and then disappears... In this moment it has a form of historicity, and it becomes history. [...] To follow this you need recordings.¹¹

Over the course of fieldwork, barely a single concert went by without being recorded (or filmed) by Kürvers, the venue or the musicians, but while Quiet Cue uploaded the resulting videos to their website, Ausland and the salon were unable to publish their recorded archives because of rights issues.¹²

Kürvers was always happy to share his recordings with the musicians who had performed in each concert, and most knew that if he was in the audience, their performance was probably being documented by his concealed stereo microphone and portable digital recorder.

Ultimately, these recordings were documents, faithfully and authentically capturing the audio trace of the full spectrum of 'working' moments, searching, misunderstandings, tricks, concepts, 'mistakes', 'amazing things' and risk-taking, and, as I will now show, this 'completeness' marked an essential difference between recordings intended for documentation, and those produced for sale and release.

2. Recordings for Sale and Release

While most performers and listeners considered Improvised Music to be a primarily live form, those musicians who did record Improvised Music for release (and to be sold) generally had the following motivations in mind:

1. To reach people not in Berlin or other centres for Improvised Music. As Axel Dörner put it:

recorded many (still unreleased) concerts of the first generation of improvisers in West Germany in the late 1960s (see p. 259).

¹¹Kürvers added, "Every musician dealing with Improvised Music is in a process of development, and when we look back on the history of jazz we have the complete works of musicians who performed for 40-50 years. [...] Improvising musicians have just the same process of development... their own personal language that becomes continually stronger... and is always developing... but also a process of playing together, like the process of the emergence of [spoken] language - how language and vocabulary develops."

¹²By the time I was writing up, Ausland were publishing some recordings. See [Quiet Cue, 2014] for the Quiet Cue archive.

This is the possibility for people to listen to it who are not able to come to the concert. [...] [In general] the concert is more important than the CD. But the CD gives people who never would have the possibility, a possibility to listen to it. Somebody living in the countryside somewhere, for example.¹³

2. To get gigs (particularly in the international/festival circuit) and to exchange with colleagues. As Chris Heenan put it, this was also entirely practical:

CDs travel... they're business cards... postcards that are getting out to the world and show what you're doing.¹⁴

3. In the case of studio or home recording, to create music with an intimacy that might never be produced in front of an audience. As Biliana Voutchkova explained, herself long opposed to recording *Improvised Music* for the same reasons as Borghini:¹⁵

This practice of just being completely alone, no people, nobody there, no reason to play except our own necessity, not preparing for anything - just sitting and playing, and the record running... somehow became precious to me. [...] This music would never appear in a concert setting because it's a quality that we don't get when there's other people and you're performing. [...] There is no element of even recognising anything else besides our own selves and our own music-making in the moment. And so... somehow, I realised, that would never be heard by anybody unless we release a record... there is a quality that it carries that is not available live.

To these ends, and except in very rare cases (when the 'musical' outcome was deemed suitably successful), musicians sought not to release the 'warts and all' concert recordings used for documentation, but instead, published focussed and distilled recordings that showcased the best of their work. Such musicians aspired to create 'working' musical outcomes that would stand repeated listening, and used this opportunity to propose 'model' or 'best case' examples of their artistic intention - in the process, as Klaus Kürvers put it, producing an "everlasting work of art [*Kunstwerk*]".

¹³It is also important to remember that without recorded music almost none of these musicians would have ended up doing what they're doing themselves (see Chapter 7). Many younger musicians who had moved to Berlin from further afield had also already heard CDs of Berlin improvisers such as Burkhard Beins, Andrea Neumann and Axel Dörner.

¹⁴Jan Roder added, "I think the recordings are actually a pragmatical thing. For myself, I wouldn't have the need to record anything of it actually... [but] if you have a project and you want to play with it, it's actually very hard to play now [without a recording]". Also telling, was that musicians rarely purchased each others' recordings, but more often than not simply exchanged them.

¹⁵Voutchkova added, "For many years I didn't want to put anything on record because I find the live experience so strong that I feel that inevitably by putting it on record you take away part of it."

For Christian Lillinger, a good recording was “very clear - clearly defined”, and for Nils Ostendorf, it was a responsibility to be extremely selective in his recorded output:

I don't believe so much in completely Improvised Music records [and] I want that it's really just a distillation of the very best. I don't want to listen to any kind of boring two minutes on a CD.

As opposed to recordings for documentation alone, and in the pursuit of this clarity, many musicians chose to edit out sections of searching and (undesirable) ‘mistakes’, and most acknowledged that the processual/interactional axis of musical appreciation did not necessarily come across through the recorded version of an improvised performance. Such musicians dealt with this limitation by cutting out these elements and focussing on ‘musically working’ sections,¹⁶ and Klaus Kürvers explained how:

Whatever's there you have to live with it for the rest of your life: you have to be able to listen to it again in 20 or 30 years time and say “Yes, that's how I wanted it at the time.” [...]

The basic situation is totally different when you put on a CD at home that is a condensed artwork, like a painting, and that [still] comes from this collective improvisation process, but [is] carefully checked by the musicians, and then released as such.

Edits existed, accordingly, on the level of re-ordering the tracks of a performance or a studio session (or selecting the best tracks or sections from several performances and sessions), as well as editing inside each track to remove ‘mistakes’ and periods of searching. Each musician expressed different tastes along a continuum between those who considered editing only a last-case scenario and those, like Ostendorf, who saw it as an essential part of record production.

At one extreme of this spectrum, several musicians connected to jazz and (Post-)Free Jazz were proud of releases that consisted of exceptional complete performances (or those with only minimal edits),¹⁷ but this also held for other improvisational sub-styles: the cover of Mike Majkowski's *Tremolo* stated that it was an unedited recording of a complete performance, and Majkowski described how what could easily just have been a recording for documentation turned into a release:

It was a live performance... and I also really decided to make that pretty clear - recorded live, no edits, no overdubs. [...] I was lucky enough to have recorded *that* gig, and have been really happy with the gig. [...] Somehow on that solo gig I just pulled it off.

¹⁶These sections were generally deemed to be ‘working’ on the ‘musical’/sounding level, or on both ‘musical’ and interactional/processual levels.

¹⁷The groups *Booklet*, Dell-Westergaard-Lillinger, *Grünen* and *Kaluza Quartet* were all good examples.

At the other end of the continuum, Hannes Lingens described one of his favourite CDs, where:

I read the [liner notes], and then I read it was cut... from 5 or 6 different concerts and they made 3 or 4 tracks from that. [...] [Track 1] was 3 concerts and they made one track from it. [...] For me, that just proves that editing doesn't destroy the flow, [and] I think it's totally appropriate.

On one recording, effectively correcting a 'mistake' he made whilst performing on a borrowed drum while recording in Austria, Lingens even reverted to overdubbing, telling me that:

We did some overdubs - which is an improv no-do! [laughs] [...] I tried a certain thing on that drum and it didn't come out the way I wanted it... so when we heard the recording, we heard this really tiny sound that I tried to make and it didn't really come out, and then... we said, "The idea was there, [so] let's make an overdub with my drum."

We did that here in Berlin... and there was another similar thing with [saxophonist] Pierre [Borel]. [...] Pierre didn't play [for] the first ten or fifteen minutes, and we just felt it was just a little bit too sparse, so he recorded a few single sounds and we just put them somewhere, like three or four.

Adding that he didn't consider this "a dramatic change of the music", Lingens defended his decision by asserting that the authenticity of the recording was maintained by the fact that perhaps on another night, with his own drum, "It *could* have been played like that", and others defended such choices by insisting that the music had still come about through improvisation in the first place.

Contention in editing practices also extended to controversy (or at least different tastes) in mixing and mastering, and just as many musicians took pride in releasing unedited recordings, instrumentalists involved in sound- and noise-based instrumental musics often took care to point out that there were no electronics or post-production used in the creation of certain textures or timbres. Whilst simultaneously helping to the listener to imagine (and re-construct) sound-sources in order to reconstruct interactional and processual elements of performance, Majkowski recalled how:

I'd also seen other albums of people that I look up to... [like] Robin Hayward's solo tuba [album], where he'd write "No electronics or electronic processing". This is solo acoustic tuba, but what you're listening to is like "Oh, man, how's he doing that?!" [...] Knowing that there's no overdubs and no electronic processing somehow makes it all the more interesting.

He concluded that, for his own release:

I just wanted to say, “No guys, I’m actually doing this live! Check it out!”

And such authenticity-related ideals often extended to the use of artificially added reverb, equalisation, compression or other common tools of the modern studio, with most musicians avoiding such ‘unnatural’ effects.¹⁸ Just as in the case of musicians’ use of editing, however, these were areas in which the limits of acceptability were constantly being redefined, Olaf Rupp using compression and unconventionally close-miking techniques to make “small sounds more present, and easier to hear [and] to listen to on the speakers”, and Jan Roder joked that in his solo recording, where compression was used, “Exactly the guys who said that’s terrible said it sounds great!”.

Improvisation as the basis for Electroacoustic Composition

Finally in this section, improvised material was used by many electronic musicians as material for ‘tape’ pieces or fixed electroacoustic works, and this constituted a third category of recorded works, which were also intended for release (or public diffusion), and which were an extension of existing practices in editing and post-production, taken to the n^{th} degree.

As already shown, Valerio Tricoli separated his improvised and composed activities in terms of live and recorded activities,¹⁹ and he noted that:

I never did an impro record in my life. Neither am I looking for it at all. Zero. [...] When someone gives me a recording of some gigs, I could use that as materials for composition... “Let’s take these ten seconds here, filter [out] all the rest and take the high frequencies of that” [...] or, “Ah, let’s take this part and speed it up five times”... [but] for me it’s *nothing* at that point. Nothing but rough material.

Contrary to his unedited solo performances, Mike Majkowski’s output also included tracks such as *Ink on Paper*, in which:

There’s twenty takes of a twenty minute track... and then I collected each one of those. And [on] each track I’m doing pretty much the same thing. And then I stick them all together, and that’s the track. But it wasn’t just sticking it together - like I think in the first few minutes it starts with 3 layers, and then it builds. I also sculpted it. [...] At the most intense point I even doubled a few tracks and... maybe at the most dense point it could

¹⁸As Axel Dörner said, “I try to avoid that”. Incidentally, most instrumental musicians were also opposed to the use of amplification and artificial reverb in live performance, Dörner describing how, “If I amplify, then it’s electronic music - it’s not coming out of the bell of the trumpet. It goes from there into a microphone and from there through wires into speakers which have a membrane which is moving. And that changes very much my sound. I play amplified also... [but] I play then with the sound system and the room.”

¹⁹See footnote, p. 246.

have been 24 tracks... so I really composed that piece.

In the *Rhythm Complication and Brass* project, a live performance of Clayton Thomas and Burkhard Beins was recorded and overlaid with edited autonomous solo recordings of some of Berlin's most well-known brass players, also producing a musical result that, like the use of composed and conceptual elements explored in Chapter 9, would never have come about by improvisation (or conventional composition) alone.²⁰

And in many cases, much like the evolution of the collectively composed music of *The International Nothing* or Biliana Voutchkova's work with dancers,²¹ much basic material came about through collective improvisation, only to be fixed and manipulated later, in the studio.

²⁰No doubt with some roots in his initial fascination with multitrack recording (p. 139), Beins was also working together with Michael Renkel on a project where, "We make very close mike recordings of tiny details... and we have an editing process where we try to construct music with all these little details. [...] Sometimes one of us is working out a layer and gives it to the other one, and the other one is re-working it and using some other elements on top of it. [...] It's very slow and we're just exploring this possibility together, but it's very interesting."

²¹See p. 219.

11.3 Formats, Labels, Distribution and Economy

Improvised Music was released on a variety of formats, from USB sticks and digital downloads, to CDs, CD-Rs,²² cassettes, digital downloads and vinyl.

Hannes Lingens told me that “I believe it makes sense to think about the right format for each release”, and such decisions were often based on practical concerns, as well as cost and quality:

[On one LP] we had to cut out certain parts of the set because of a very disturbing [microphone] sound, so we were left with about 22 minutes, which is just about the length of one LP side. For the 7” release it was the idea, that the sound of rotation (a marble running along the rim of my snare drum) would be visible in the rotating record. For the CD-R it was the unusual length (26 minutes), which seemed too short for a CD and is too long for an LP side.

In addition to CDs (still the majority of releases), many releases of the last couple of years came in the form of a combination of limited edition vinyl (intended as collectors’ items) and digital downloads, with the two existing in tandem.²³ Burkhard Beins considered the qualities of vinyl to be, “Better sound. Nicer object. Longer durability”, and added:

The CD is just a transitional medium. [...] Digitalised recording doesn’t necessarily need a physical medium at all, [and] I believe [this] will soon become redundant.

For listeners and collectors who want to have a certain music as a media object, it makes much sense to go back to the analog qualities of vinyl (which can’t be transferred onto computers nor into the internet). There might be a chance that vinyl will coexist with online or cloud music - somewhat similar to books and digitalised text.

In general, high fidelity releases were preferred,²⁴ and it was not intended that Improvised Music recordings should be used as background music, on the train, or in other environments where essential details could be lost.

Instead, such recordings were intended for concentrated home listening and, accordingly, most musicians were suspicious of, or totally opposed to, the dissemination of their

²²CD-Rs refers to home-burnt or ‘duplicated’ cds, generally cheaper for small runs, as opposed to commercially pressed ‘replicated’ CDs that involve the making of a costly glass master, but allow for higher quality printing on the face of the disc.

²³This was also in direct response to a collectively observed decline in CD sales, previously the format-of-choice.

²⁴Except for when, in the case of many cassette releases, this was to produce an purposefully lo-fi effect.

music through low-revenue (or free) online services, such as Youtube or Spotify. Antonio Borghini commented that:

We have to ask ourselves how much complexity can go through an email or can go through a Youtube video... things are getting smaller and smaller and smaller, I mean, the objects themselves, and the formats and everything, but we should ask ourselves also how much information does fill into it. [...] At the very end, it's all about that. Sound is something you should really fight for, you should defend, because it's the soul of it, it's the voice of the music and I'm sorry but... mp3, Youtube videos and everything... they kill the sound... you miss the whole. [...] Let's keep an eye on the real life.

Another listener pointed out that edits in short online videos could be misleading:

Before concerts, you go to Youtube to see what it's about and you get completely misled. [...] You think it's this kind of Reductionist [thing]... but it's not, it's straight-ahead Free Jazz - very expressive. And just because the part of it that was captured on that Youtube video was... the minimalist part of the concert they were recording, and they edited out the other part... It can be helpful [but] it depends.

Some musicians, including Els Vandeweyer, wrote to Youtube uploaders to take down their work, feeling that such badly recorded music might adversely affect their careers,²⁵ and others, including Olaf Rupp, also questioned the financial reality of such services:

I don't understand at all this whole attitude of getting [things for] free in the internet. [...] 3 years ago, I changed to [the] Linux operating system and I was fascinated, because I thought "Hey, I just [download it], and then I have an operating system for free". [...] [But] who's working for this and how's he surviving? Because I see how difficult it is for me to survive, and it must be the same for this programmer. [...] On Linux there are many good programmes, and [you] can just take them... open source... [but] how do they survive? It's so hipster [*sic*] in internet communities - as soon as you talk about money you get a wave of opposition. [...] I mean, in a world with [an unconditional] basic income I would think the same...²⁶ I would agree to this. Fine. I got my surviving here, and then I produce my music for free. But it isn't. And until then... it's really strange.

²⁵Vandeweyer described how, "I really get pissed off when people just [upload] stuff... because if it's bad quality, the image and sound, I have to live from it. People check me out, and I have written [to] 5 people to take it off."

²⁶The idea of a state-provided basic income was a current political theme in Germany at the time of writing.

Labels

Perhaps needless to say by now, record label tastes also somewhat reflected the various aesthetic and social distinctions explored throughout this study. Such labels were often run by musicians or fans,²⁷ and were based not just in Berlin (Absinth, Schraum, JazzWerkstatt Berlin, Umlaut²⁸) but further afield in Germany (Gligg, No Business) and abroad - with labels in Russia (Mikroton), France (Potlatch), Italy (Burp Production), Switzerland (Intakt, Flexion, Hathut, Insubordinations), Portugal (Cleanfeed, Creative Sources), Norway (Sofa), England (Eminem, Leo, Another Timbre), Australia (Avantwhatever) and Japan (Ftarri).

Releases typically had runs of between 100 and 500 copies (very rarely 1000 or more),²⁹ and limited edition collectors items were often hand-numbered, or were accompanied by unique artworks, Michael Thieke recalling that with the *Hotelgäste* they once spent one evening hand-painting 300 covers.

One musician considered selling 200 copies “Good” and 100 “OK” (sales of jazz/Free Jazz were generally higher than of (Post-)Reductionist/Echtzeitmusik recordings), and one website advertised a “long-sold-out” CD, which on closer inspection turned out to be a limited edition of 150 copies.

Distribution (whether self-released or on a small label) was mainly through concerts, online or in a small selection of specialist retailers, and the JazzWerkstatt Berlin shop stocked recordings by its own label and others, whereas Staalplaat (who previously shared their premises with the venue Quiet Cue) advertised releases from many (Post-)Reductionist/Echtzeitmusik musicians. It was virtually impossible to find such recordings on Amazon.com and in Berlin’s main record store, *Dussmann das Kulturkaufhaus* (despite its extensive Neue Musik section). This, in addition to many musicians’ wishes not to publish on Youtube or (in many cases) to have their own website, meant that, on the whole, recorded Improvised Music was incredibly difficult to access, and this made it even harder for the new listener to stumble across it by chance.

Despite a small selection of dedicated online blogs and specialist publications,³⁰ criticism

²⁷Owing to the (often) casual nature of such relationships, contracts were rarely made and many musicians were frustrated by the lack of professionalism shown by these enterprises - stock often arrived later than promised, musicians’ plans would be cancelled at the last minute following a 3-year wait, and few labels accounted to their artists. Just like Berlin’s venues, many labels came and went, operating for some months or years before disappearing again, and also causing frustration when this meant that musicians’ recordings were no longer available.

²⁸Umlaut is based in France, Sweden and Berlin.

²⁹Jan Roder described that the Monk’s Casino record (*Die Enttäuschung* plus Alexander von Schlippenbach), which consisted of the complete compositions of Thelonious Monk, was a huge exception (“It never happened before, and I don’t know if it’ll ever happen again!”). Roder estimated that 5000 copies had been sold, in comparison to *Die Enttäuschung*’s usual turnover of 800-900.

³⁰Such publications included Paris Transatlantic, Signal to Noise, Freejazz.org, Bad Alchemy, Ihatemusic.com, The Sound Projector, Ken Waxman’s blog, and Monsieur Délire.

was on an extremely small scale, and many musicians lamented “the abysmal quality of journalism”, whilst being aware that there was no money to be made as an Improvised Music writer and that such writing would always be limited to a “hobby”, at best. Whilst the British magazine the *Wire* remained one of very few reviews that musicians felt would be helpful in selling their recordings and in generating exposure, many expressed disappointment that the magazine no longer gave so much space to Improvised Music, and, according to several musicians, appeared to require the purchase of advertising space in order to guarantee an article or review.

Among the few writers respected by musicians and expert listeners were Americans John Corbett and Ken Waxman, but on the whole, few musicians looked to critics for input into their work, with very few following the press on a regular basis, and most taking the opinions of their colleagues more seriously (Chris Heenan described how, “I think I’m used to surviving in a vacuum.”)

In terms of mainstream radio, while there was no programme dedicated to Improvised Music, RBB’s³¹ Ulf Drechsel was praised for supporting Berlin’s more jazz-related improvised musics,³² and some Echtzeitmusik-scene musicians were grateful to presenters such as Gisela Nauck, Caroline Naujocks and Martina Seeber for occasional exposure on *Deutschlandfunk*, WDR and *Radio Kultur*, in the shows *Atelier Neue Musik* and *Studio Elektronische Musik*. Internationally, opportunities for airplay were extremely limited and revolved around a selection of specialist online shows, and these included The Mystery Lesson, The Sound Projector, and JD Zazie’s broadcasts for the Staalplat shop and record-label.

Income from recorded music (sales and session fees) formed little or no part of musicians’ revenue, and whilst some labels occasionally paid fees in the region of €200 or €300 to more well known artists, recordings were more commonly funded by residencies and awards, private donors, or, most frequently, by the musicians themselves (who would perform for free, even when the recordings were released later by a label).³³

One label had its own studio and used this to avoid paying production costs, however as one musician said:

Then you have to go to [the other side of Germany], so then you could also hire a studio here for the same amount of money! [laughs]. And you may get a better sound if you do it here.

Other labels experimented with economic models in which expensive vinyl releases

³¹ *Runfunk Berlin-Brandenburg* - Berlin’s broadcaster.

³² Nationwide, many musicians were critical that jazz-related programming still focussed on the big bands employed by radio stations such as WDR and NDR, considered traditional and out-moded by Berlin’s improvisers.

³³ It was common for musicians to make a recording and then to ‘shop it around’ to labels, who then (although it was rarely formalised or contracted as such) would offer a licensing or co-production deal (the label paying some combination of mastering, duplication and press costs).

subsidised cheaper formats, so that when physical copies had sold out, digital versions became available for free. And, due to the lack of airplay, limited production runs and the fact that the majority of Berlin performances were to small audiences in (often) unlicensed venues, income from publishing and mechanical reproduction rights was also negligible.³⁴

For this reason, as well as the fact that GEMA was held responsible for closing down several small venues when they couldn't pay the license fees,³⁵ many musicians didn't consider it worth becoming members and most were concerned (and even angry) that the organisation did not take Improvised Music seriously.³⁶ Some self-confessed 'GEMA-cheats' got round this problem by transcribing their improvisations and registering the resulting scores (often notated to resemble the most complex Neue Musik works) as *E-Musik*; others described the GEMA as a "mafia" that only represented the interests of Dieter Bohlen (Germany's Simon Cowell) and media/ringtone composers; and more were frustrated by the considerable bureaucracy needed to ensure even a small payment.

The Musician as Engineer

This entire financial picture, as well as musicians taking control of aesthetic choices in record production, led to several musicians becoming recording engineers, recording and mixing their own productions from live concerts, as well as holding 'sessions' in venues such as Ausland (available for affordable hire to its regular musicians), small studios, and musicians' own homes and rehearsal spaces.

Axel Dörner made recordings of small ensembles using his laptop computer and audio interface, and described how this had become possible only in the last 10 years, aided by falling technology costs and laptop computers fast enough to record multi-track audio:

It's exciting... [and] it's also a new thing that the musician becomes a sound engineer. [...] Before, musicians, mainly they played, or they recorded themselves, but usually in relatively bad quality. But now the musicians are also sound engineers, and they produce also CDs.

For Michael Thieke, who also owned his own set-up:

Most of the records I did were self-recorded. We work on our own on the mixing... And then the completed master goes to the label. [...]

³⁴See p. 73 for more on the GEMA. Several musicians were also registered with the collection organisations in their 'home' countries, such as PRS/MCPS, SACEM and Buma/Stemra.

³⁵See [Bariletti, 2011].

³⁶GEMA consider Improvised Music to be *U-Musik* (*Unterhaltungs Musik*, Entertainment Music) - on a far lower payment schedule than *Ernste Musik* (lit. 'Serious Music').

I bought a good computer, a good soundcard and two good microphones. And since then, a lot of the records I did, I recorded myself - the second *Nickendes Perlgras* record is self-recorded, all the *International Nothing* records are self-recorded, [and] *Hotelgäste*, *The Pitch*, we always record on our own.

Thieke added that a certain amount of goodwill among the community was essential to this working:

Since a lot of people now work this way, and everybody knows each other, and everybody has maybe one or two good microphones, it's also a nice thing of sharing. So often I've given my microphones away to other people that asked me, and then if I need some, because I don't have the money to have 8 good microphones... then we can borrow each others. [...] It's a necessity, also. I would prefer to go into a studio and [not] need to think about the technical part of the whole thing, but there's no way to finance it.

As Olaf Rupp pointed out, having recorded all of his solo output at home (in his kitchen), there were other reasons than economic ones for self-recording:

The solo stuff I always record at home, ja. The first... solo recording [I did], I hired a studio, I went there, and I only played junk. 3 hours just junk. In really the highest, big studio quality! [laughs]

And I paid something like... 500 German Marks. [...] And then I took the decision [that] I could take this money and buy a microphone, and then... I set it up. [...] I do test recordings, and it's standing there, and then I wait for a good day and a good moment, and I think this is the most important factor in my music. [...]

In recording *Improvised Music* it is like in photography - choosing the right moment is a big part of the work.

Again, the possibility to control the aesthetics of the mix and post-production was important to many musicians, Axel Dörner explaining that:

Sometimes I was not so happy of how it sounded in the studio, and... what the engineer did with it. I could feel there [was] too much edit, too much reverb and other strange things. [...] Of course, often sound people are not so much experienced with this [kind of music], so it can be very problematic.³⁷

³⁷The same problems often emerged when creating a live sound in venues with inexperienced or unsympathetic sound engineers - Andrea Neumann recalling a soundcheck where the sound engineer tried to filter out noises from her mixing desk which he thought were technical problems or mistakes (but were integral parts of the music), and Burkhard Beins remembering a soundcheck with *Phosphor* where they were compelled to send the sound engineer home and do it themselves, "Running up into the control room until we got the sound right."

And Klaus Kürvers concurred, recalling that even in the early days of Improvised Music:

It was difficult to record this new music... because the recording engineers... would mix the music just like jazz, with the solo instrument turned up, and everything else turned down, as an accompaniment. But the music wasn't conceived this way - it was conceived on one level, and it was intentional that an instrument might sometimes disappear into the sound, into the noise, and emerge again... like waves around a sailing boat. [...] We recorded it as it was - the natural mix in the club.³⁸

³⁸Kürvers added that Sven-Åke Johansson had recently heard his recordings from the 1960s, and said that this was exactly what they had wanted, but at the time no-one had mixed it this way.

Part III

Chapter 12

In Conclusion

Structure and Identity

While remaining a small, tightly-knit and ‘hidden’ underground scene (often as much by the choice of its members, as by economic necessity), the European Improvised Music scene and the Berlin Improvised Music scene, in particular, has grown significantly from its 1960s beginnings, in terms of both its size and diversity.

Due to the variety of backgrounds (the scene including musicians from the Americas, Australia and Japan), as well as the influence of the American composer John Cage and New York’s 1990s Downtown scene (especially on younger musicians and the Echtzeitmusik community) I believe that it makes little sense to continue to speak of a unified ‘European Improvised Music’ and, instead, I propose the idea of Berlin’s scene as an essential meeting point for musicians from all over the world - one of many local scenes (or group of local expressions) within the context of an international ‘translocal’ Improvised Music community [Bennett and Peterson, 2004].¹ This social group belongs to the wider historical context of American and European Improvised Music, and also references the various disciplines that have inspired it (jazz, Neue Musik, Electronic Music, etc.).

Improvised Music remains an urban music, most Berlin residents having moved to the city from smaller, more provincial towns (where they had discovered their musical calling through unconventional, unlikely and uninstitutionalised channels),² and, as Hannerz points out:

¹Bennett and Peterson describe how the term ‘translocal scene’ “refers to widely scattered local scenes drawn into regular communication around a distinctive form of music and lifestyle”, whereas a ‘local scene’ “corresponds most closely with the original notion of a scene as clustered around a specific geographic focus... an equation of ‘scene’ with ‘community’, [and with] locally situated pockets of grassroots musical creativity distinct from global mainstream music styles” [Bennett and Peterson, 2004, 6-8].

²Mainly through more conventional jazz or experimental rock/experimental electronic music.

In the small community, each one of these people might have been the only person of a kind, and the pressures of conformity would have hindered expressions of what would then be mere idiosyncrasy.

[Hannerz, 1980, 25]

A connection to the international scene (touring and festivals, the wider social network) was essential to ‘success’ within this world (when measured in terms of economics and ‘fame’), and, with very few exceptions, Improvised Music-making served as an expression of identity, on a range of different levels (practical and musical).

Musicians expressed their tastes in terms of:

- their engagement with Improvised Music - from purists of one sub-style to those involved in a variety of improvised musical pursuits, and from those who performed in mainstream jazz, Neue Musik and pop/rock settings to those active as composers. Some looked to Improvised Music for all (or part) of their income, whereas for others this formed a negligible part of their financial existence, and I would argue that the choices of players with a range of voices (bi- or poly-musical), as well as those who earned their money outside of music or through teaching, directly reflected the kind of plural identities described by Lahire, as well as Hannerz’ role repertoires [Hannerz, 1980, Lahire, 2011].
- the choice (in many cases) to live a low-budget lifestyle, outside of the mainstream (on ideological grounds, as well as necessarily).
- the ideological grounds underlying and uniting their choice of musical activities (a non-mainstream feeling or modernistic discourses of the ‘new’).
- the use of a repertoire of individual musical materials (selected in relation to listening tastes, experience and needs arising during performance).
- the manifestation of underlying social and political ideologies (whether evident musically or in a lifestyle choice).

For most of its proponents, Improvised Music was still considered an ‘Art Music’ (extending the convictions of the 1940s jazz musicians), although, for many, this was not at odds with having fun and entertaining.

However, Berlin’s Improvised Music was no longer (if it ever was) a music that could be uniformly classed as a political or protest music: many (especially younger) musicians defined themselves as non-political, and even for those who expressed the individualistic, anti-standardisation and anti-mainstream sentiments shown in Chapter 10, not all chose to manifest these ideals in the structure of their music-making, or were thinking about this directly while playing.

Only a handful of musicians engaged with the angry ‘screaming’ tactics of their 1960s predecessors, and, across the various sub-scenes identified in this study, I would argue

that the expression of identity in contemporary Improvised Music was generally a more private and less superficially emotional affair than that of the 1960s. Again, this was manifested in musicians' choice of musical materials, and such expressions were also concealed in the social and political ideologies which underpinned many improvisers' work (when this was present).

The scene encompassed musicians of many different backgrounds, from those conservatoire-trained from the age of three, to those with almost no formal music training. Such musicians often played side-by-side, and many 'trained' musicians had rejected their formal educations in jazz and classical music on ideological grounds (often deeming it too 'boring', 'traditional' or impersonal). For all musicians there was a continual process of self-reflection and self-learning, and the importance of 'learning by doing' and self-directed research was emphasised repeatedly in terms of each musician's development, also in the case of formally educated performers.

Improvising musicians generally avoided 'rote' or 'accepted' solutions, preferring to develop their own practise solutions that developed the means to do what they wanted to do, and, in addition to attending concerts and informal jam sessions, many used recording as a means of reflecting on their practise in private, while others played along to records (as a means of always being 'in the music').

From the point of view of equality, problems of gender and background remained (although the scene was felt to be continually more open to women and those of different ethnic backgrounds, and was in no sense opposed to a greater diversity), as did those of sustainability (in terms of the fleetingness and 'unprofessional' nature of many promoters and record labels). However, whilst problems of door money concerts and non-profit making record releases were important to many, a considerable amount of goodwill (sharing resources, or trying to play together even if it didn't work) often made up for such economic difficulties.

Improvised Music Making: Conventions and Distinctions

Practical matters aside, I believe that the most important findings of this thesis are the range of conventions, expectations, intentions and values that underlay the work of Berlin's improvising musicians.

From this point of view, I argue that Berlin's Improvised Music scene formed its own 'art world' or sociological Field,³ and this section outlines the bounds of this field, showing the terms which musicians used to distinguish between their practices and to establish their own positions, inside the wider field of 'Improvised Music'.

³Here the term is used in the sense of Bourdieu's *champ*, and I use the term 'sociological field' to distinguish between this and the 'Field' that musicians talked of, as defined on p. 187. The relationship of this field to the international scene and other local Improvised Music scenes may be evaluated only after further research.

In addition to providing some first steps towards Improvised Music-specific performance and listening conventions, this section also serves as a key for those searching for an ‘emic’ understanding (as opposed to the ‘open’ listening proposed by others in Chapter 10), and I hope that identifying the choices made by performers during and in advance of performance will have important implications for the listening practices of scholars, as well as everyday listeners - providing a clear framework for future evaluation, analysis and research, as well as directly addressing the questions posed by Chapter 3.

I argue that these distinctions put pay to the idea of Improvised Music as a homogenous practice and, instead, I propose a redefinition of the term as an umbrella term, under which a variety of differing-yet-interconnected practices flourished. Such differences were made clear by the range of aesthetic tastes outlined in Chapter 6, and the varying balances of ‘improvised’ (real-time) and ‘composed’ (pre-meditated) elements discussed in Chapter 9 (‘real’ improvising, ‘tricks’ and strategies, rules and concepts, compositional elements) also contributes towards the validity of this suggestion.

Expert listeners, just as the musicians playing, altered their listening strategies during performance, and there was a clear need to distinguish between the ‘musical’/‘sounding’/aesthetic and processual/interactional levels of performance, separating ‘musical’ results from the processes that generated them.

The ‘musical’/‘sounding’/aesthetic level was deemed to be ‘working’ when the music converged in terms of aesthetic taste and timing (micro-timing, structural thinking, ‘locking in’), whereas the processual/interactional level was successful when ‘honesty’ and ‘strength’ were maintained, or when a concept was followed through. These levels were valued and mediated differently in different forms of Improvised Music, and ‘real’ improvisers prioritised the processual/interactional level (remaining ‘honest’, taking the ‘risk’ that there would be no ‘working’ ‘musical’ outcome, and allowing for searching in the hope that ‘amazing’, fresh, unique moments would emerge), whereas others looked to generate more concrete and predictable musical results (limiting ‘risk’ through the use of conscious strategies, pre-planned rules and concepts, and compositions).

Individual and group levels of musical practice were differentiated between, and it was commonly held that what was ‘new’ or novel occurred mainly on the group level. Improvised Music was not entirely ‘Improvised’ in the popular or commonly accepted sense of the word, and instead, even in ‘real’ improvising, a known (or composed) repertoire of personally selected (yet still flexible) pre-prepared materials was used, in order to create a unique collective result.

Such musical materials included timbres, noises, sounds, extended techniques, melodic or harmonic patterns, ‘licks’, samples (in the case of electronic musicians) and instruments,⁴ and these materials were accumulated in relation to listening tastes and a social feedback

⁴In the case of Andrea Neumann’s inside-piano, or the instrument building of many electronic musicians.

loop created during performing situations (which often identified the need for new materials or increased flexibility). This repertoire of materials was assessed in terms of its ‘honesty’ (each musicians’ authentic relation to their material), flexibility, originality and development over time, and musicians (mostly) engaged in regular and extensive practise routines in order to train their skills, flexibility and strength.

On the group level, other elements were often pre-meditated, ‘known’ or ‘composed’, and many musicians used rules, concepts and compositions as underlying structures, with even the purest ‘real’ improvisers noting the importance of feedback and feedforward (knowledge of past experiences with the same and different musicians) within each performance, and over the course of an entire career. Such ‘known’ elements allowed for decision-making and the prediction of likely outcomes, as well as ensuring a sense of trust (which was maintained by not doing anything ‘strange’, creating clear ‘directions’, ensuring that what they played ‘made sense’, devoting energy and thought to structural/formal concerns and working together towards a common goal).

In addition, many ventured into the unknown on an individual level, and such musicians used ‘controlled-discontrol’ to generate new materials on-the-fly, deliberately invoking areas where they were not in control and taking varying degrees of risk to generate new results (often with a high possibility that the musical outcome wouldn’t ‘work’). This was another question of taste, and while some musicians rarely took this risk, for others it was an essential part of their practice. This mediation of ‘known’/pre-meditated/composed elements and ‘unknown’/real-time /‘improvised’ elements provided a rich range of musical possibilities, and these were explored along a continuum that ranged from the most unique and sophisticated Echtzeitmusik-scene Composer-Performers to the most ‘real’ and ‘risk’-taking Post-Free Jazz improvisers.

This knowledge, trust and experience, whether in a band of 20 years or in a first meeting, constituted the (musical) Field specific to each group (and a ‘known’ element in itself), and I propose that such trust, memories, experiences, aesthetic intentions and pre-prepared material repertoires formed substantial ‘known’ texts on which analysis and evaluation of Improvised Music might rest. Such underlying structures and conventions were often evident only on a processual/interactional level (and not always in the musical/sounding/aesthetic trace), and these proposed conventions confirm many of the assumptions of Pressing, Sansom and Monson.⁵

Such ‘known’ elements also point to the question of retrievability and, returning to the question of musical works, the question is whether a new Improvised-Music definition of the Work might now be possible, that considers these elements as texts worthy of analysis.⁶

If one were to propose Improvised Music as a model for society, I would instead contend

⁵These assumptions are explained in Chapter 3, and are discussed in more depth below.

⁶I will return to this question in more depth below.

that it represented several personal expressions of this, with each choice made by improvisers placing a different responsibility upon the individual, in order to realise a range of specific collective outcomes (of which there were also several expressions or aims). Those foregrounding the individual level often did so in order to express their ‘honesty’, mood or identity (in such cases this was often deemed more important than the emergence of any coherent or beautiful ‘musical’ result), whereas those more concerned with the group related their performances to various social and political models (although such assumptions and analogies should be used with care, especially in the case of non-political musicians or those who claimed not to express their social/political views in their music-making).

Instead of representing one coherent social/political stance, Improvised Music (as a whole) represented something of a laboratory (or playground) where all manner of social situations could be modelled, and these scenarios ranged from societies comprised of the most stoically ‘strong’, idiosyncratic and ‘honest’ individuals, to the those where musicians compromised these qualities for the realisation of a specific collective outcome (although I still do not believe this to the extent of Soules, who claims that such identity is relinquished entirely).⁷

I also argue that further distinctions are necessary for the enjoyment of recorded Improvised Music, and musicians differentiated between music intended for documentation, release and electroacoustic composition (mediating the lack of visual information and the acceptability of ‘searching’ accordingly). These differences were mediated by choices in editing and (post-)production, and, once again, these decisions balanced the need for authenticity and ‘honesty’ with the pressures of creating coherent ‘musical’ results that would bear repeated listening.

Musicians and expert listeners drew distinctions between musicians who played ‘for their audience’ (adapting their music for the audience or the room) and those who created music where it was unimportant, from the point of view of creation, whether the music was ‘enjoyed’ or entertained. And, despite a general assumption that listeners should, insofar as possible, embrace the Cagian notion of all sound as musical (and that such sounds should be freed from their everyday associations), differences were noted between ‘literal’, ‘Cagian’, ‘microscopic’ and ‘contrapuntal’ listening strategies, as well as between interactive/reactive stances (‘reactive’, ‘non-reactive’, ‘non-listening’).

I also suggest that there were different kinds of genre-specific mistakes taking place in Improvised Music-making, and, while many ‘real’ improvisers insisted there was no such thing as a mistake (and that they had to live with the consequence of whatever happened), some claimed that a mistake was simply something that didn’t come out as intended, and others described mistakes on the group level as choices which unintentionally destroyed the tension or ‘direction’ of a performance, rule or concept.

⁷See p. 61.

The first two categories of mistake were often classed as positive occurrences (leading to new and unforeseen ‘amazing’ moments) and such Improvised Music-specific definitions also applied to concepts of skill and virtuosity (which, I argue, should now incorporate mental agility, the flexibility of materials, the coherence of a performance and the control of extended techniques, as well as traditional notions of speed, ‘chops’ and virtuosity). The concept of being ‘in the moment’ also required some redefinition and, on the most part, this referred to an awareness that encompassed the present, as well as what had been before and what was (potentially) to follow (with only few musicians becoming entirely ‘lost’, and many adopting strategies such as looking at themselves from the outside, in order to develop such awareness).

It is my intention, then, that such conventions provide several valuable first steps towards developing an ‘emic’ understanding of Improvised Music-making and to acquiring the necessary specific cultural capital necessary for the appreciation of each sub-style, form and (musical) Field. These distinctions, coupled with an Improvised Music-specific acceptance that the music would be different each time and that a certain perseverance in listening to multiple performances would be rewarded, therefore offers a significant entry point for those looking for the ‘Mae West’ perspective on Improvised Music and its many sub-practices.

Theory

While more introspective (‘cooler’/‘Eurological’) and more outwardly emotional (‘hot’/‘Afrological’) forms of Improvised Music still existed in Berlin,⁸ I argue that these distinctions now formed the ends of a continuum, and that such distinctions were, firstly, not used by musicians and, secondly, were not sufficient to distinguish between the range of practices I witnessed.

As far as skill and virtuosity were concerned, practise, experience, knowledge of a variety of different musics, technical proficiency (if even to know that a clarinet air-sound or multiphonic would come out exactly as intended) and intense self-reflection/self-learning were valued and practiced by all musicians here as part of a lifetime-long process. And these observations, together with the accumulation of Improvised Music-specific conventions of awareness, trust and understanding showed that, in the case of the musics described in this study, this was not something that just ‘anyone’ or a naïve amateur could do.⁹

Accordingly, I would equate the specific cultural capital acquired by each ‘master’

⁸In terms of (Post-)Reductionism/Durational music as opposed to (Post-)Free Jazz, and an ongoing underlying division between older *Echtzeitmusik*-scene and jazz-related improvisers (even if some older musicians such as Dörner, Thieke and Heather crossed these apparent boundaries). The terms ‘hot’ and ‘cool’ obviously no longer encompass any racial dimension in Berlin’s Improvised Music scene.

⁹This competence also distinguished Improvised Music, in the sense of this study, from the use of improvisation in music therapy or other more amateur forms.

improviser (as well as the work and ongoing practise necessary to accumulate this) to that of any top-level classical musician, visual artist or conventional jazz musician.

As opposed to the first generation of improvisers, and both musically and politically, I didn't get the sense that the passionate fight for freedom was a discourse particularly relevant to today's Improvised Music scene, and even the most 'real' improvisers acknowledged the restrictions of their musical materials and conceptual limitations (working within these confines, as opposed to striving for an absolute freedom). I was struck by a feeling that the freedom sought by musicians of the 1960s had already been long won and that the music's discourse had moved on accordingly, and politically, this was reflected in musicians' changing definitions of the left (following 1989), as well as a move to criticise globalisation and standardisation (as opposed to any specific political regime).¹⁰

On a musical level, like the idea of the social/political 'playground' I described above, musicians now appeared more concerned with exploring different conceptions of freedom within this 'total' freedom, and many chose to limit their personal freedom in the pursuit of musically 'working' results, this rich and varied field allowing for the manifestation of a range of different social models from group to group, and musician to musician.

In light of findings concerning different levels of improvising (and their relation to individual honesty, on one hand, and collective outcomes, on the other), I also believe it is difficult to attribute such social and political models solely to the left, and the individualistic emphasis of many 'real' improvisers (even if the ultimate aim was that something 'amazing' would emerge collectively) could be described, in many senses, as being more consistent with discourses of the centre-right. Perhaps, as Berendt pointed out in Chapter 2, this once again leaves Improvised Music in a position beyond left and right, or, as Axel Dörner's 'virtual world' suggested, these musical situations simply represented a range of social hypotheses that could be tested in music, before being implemented in reality.¹¹

These findings also have important implications for the use of existing social models for Improvisation in academia¹² and, while Monson suggests that a balance of centripetal and centrifugal social forces is essential to the realisation of a 'satisfying' musical performance,¹³ this thesis confirms that there is no 'one-size-fits-all' approach and that there is no objectively "satisfying musical journey" (once again, the 'satisfactory' balancing of these forces existed on a sliding scale from those 'real' improvisers who considered a 'non-working' concert where everybody had been 'honest' to be the best,

¹⁰See p. 240.

¹¹See p. 239.

¹²The existence of apolitical improvising musicians and those who did not claim to manifest their politics in their music-making still leads me to question whether, as scholars, it is fair or relevant to project these models onto the work of musicians who did not intend this, a subject worthy of further exploration and discussion.

¹³See p. 65.

to those who preferred to use rules, concepts and compositions to ensure more concrete results).

Musical Works

As far as Improvised Music and the concept of Musical Works is concerned, this study does little to conclusively answer the questions posed in Chapter 3, and I do not consider it my position to do so. That said, I do believe that the findings of this study contribute to several of the directions that academia has taken to resolve this question, and this section outlines these observations.

First of all, it is necessary to ask if it is important to class Improvised Music performances as Works at all, and, while for many musicians, this does not appear to have been important (especially for those for whom Improvised Music was not their main money-earning profession), for those arguing for (musicological) academic and bourgeois legitimisation,¹⁴ as well as those looking for a better situation for the music as a ‘serious art form’ (state funding, GEMA), such discussion remained important.

Clearly, a description of Improvised Music practice in the terms defined in this thesis does not fit any existing definition of Musical Works (there is no score, there is no intention of repeatability), although it does come closer to Goehr’s ‘Platonic’ and ‘Modified Platonic’ stances, which do not depend on scores, although a specific (single) author is called for in the case of the latter.¹⁵

In the case of Improvised Music, I also believe it would be wrong to describe a recording of Improvised Music as a Musical Work (as Auslander and Gracyk do in *Popular Music Studies*),¹⁶ mainly for the reason that most musicians considered live performance to be its primary form (because of visual information and the relevance of music created for that moment), and that performances never sought to emulate or replicate recordings.

Similarly, I argue that while performative approaches may, perhaps, have some role to play on the level of group emergence (as yet, undetermined), the assumption that musicians did not practice or prepare, as well as that all the materials of Improvised Music performance were generated during performance (in a feedback loop between performer and audience), must also at least be questioned, if not discarded altogether.¹⁷

As an alternative, I suggest that a looser reading of the term Work (for those for whom it is important) might look towards considering the stable elements in Improvised Music-making as some form of analysable text, and these elements would include the

¹⁴I use the term ‘bourgeois’ in the sense of Bourdieu. More simply put, this means institutions such as conservatoires, concert halls and the classical music and Neue Musik establishment.

¹⁵See footnote, p. 74.

¹⁶See p. 74.

¹⁷After all, there were musicians who did not even consider their audiences.

underlying conventions and aims of each aesthetic sub-style (and level of improvisation); awareness, trust and experience; musicians' material repertoires and strategies; the Field of each group; and the development of each musician's materials over time.

These underlying expectations and conventions would provide stable, definable and ever-developing elements for comparison between performances (both in the development of long-running groups, and across the breadth of any individual musicians' range of projects and first meetings), and such elements (or underlying structures, in the sense of Improvisation Studies) suggest the kind of psychological text that Burrows refers to, as well as Schütz's 'tuning-in' and Monson's suggestion of metapragmatic indexes.¹⁸

I would very much like to imagine a future form of Improvised Music analysis that refers to the use of musicians' materials (as well as 'controlled-discontrol') within group improvisational processes, and hope that the identification of such underlying structures might contribute towards the evolution of such a field.¹⁹

To the Future of Research

This thesis leaves several avenues open for future research, with any of these sub-styles, groups, individuals or categories of musical distinctions open to greater inspection and exploration. It is very much my intention that the distinctions identified here are not an end in themselves, and could (and should) be added to or elaborated on, and these findings easily suggest the possibility for future comparative research, in terms of other local Improvised Music scenes and the international scene at large.

Additionally, I believe that a re-examination of the generative processes underlying Improvised Music practices in terms of Cognitive Psychology may now be due, in order to take account of different levels of improvisation and musicians' changing states of consciousness (including the use of materials, tricks, concepts, and the mediation of 'improvised' and 'composed' elements). And, although this is not currently my area of expertise, I would suggest that expanding on Pressing's existing model and examining these findings in terms of different types of memory (episodic and semantic, implicit and explicit), attentive selection (or switching) and the incorporation of underlying social/political/ideological aspects of improvised practice may also prove fruitful. It is clear to my mind that it is essential to investigate the need for several different (yet connected) generative processes for different levels of improvisation, and I am also convinced that one single generative model almost certainly cannot account for the range of practices identified in this study.

¹⁸See section 3.2.

¹⁹Materials could be assessed in terms of their honesty, flexibility and development over time, controlled-discontrol with the degree of risk taken (and the according 'success' or 'failure' relative to the context), and different aesthetics could be evaluated in terms of whether these aesthetics were realised (relative to the degree of 'risk' taken, number and quality of 'amazing' moments and amount of 'searching'.

In response to the almost universal use of practise, ‘known’ materials and preparation identified in Chapter 8, and the use of pre-planned rules, concepts and compositional elements discussed in Chapter 9, I suggest that the time has come for a significant re-evaluation of Performative approaches to Improvised Music-making (and the assumption that all materials are generated over the course of performance in an autopoietic feedback loop).²⁰ And the language used by participants in this study also opens avenues worthy of future inspection, in the use of terms such as ‘vocabulary’ and ‘language’ (and the validity of any analogies that such terms imply) and the rich variety of metaphors and analogies used to describe musical practices.

Other areas that I didn’t manage to address in sufficient depth here include ethnographic work into musicians’ performance practice in terms of clothing, announcements, programme notes and online presence; musicians’ group rehearsal processes; large-group and orchestral improvising (both ‘real’, and rule- and concept-based); and the role of visual (and physical) elements in performance and appreciation (between performers, and between performers and audience).

Furthermore, I am confident that every reader of this thesis will have a plethora of questions of their own, and I hope that all of these will transform into pathways for future investigation: extending, questioning and developing the analytical frameworks proposed here.

To the Future of the Berlin Scene

It was difficult to predict the future of the Berlin Improvised Music scene, given that so many attitudes existed within this microcosm.

Certainly in economic terms, while many musicians complained about the financial aspects of their existence, others placed no expectations on Improvised Music for their income (either supplementing this with other pursuits, or happy with the freedoms that such a low-budget life bought them). Likewise, some were actively engaged with attempts to perform (and legitimise) their work in Neue Music or mainstream jazz circles, however for others, the ‘underground’, non-mainstream identity of their work was something to be treasured - such musicians fearing that the music would be altered and become meaningless once absorbed into any existing mainstream.²¹ Some believed that their music was for everybody and it was only a matter of time until the music would become more popular, whereas others were resigned (happily or otherwise) to the fact that their activities would always be for a small group of connoisseurs (the dedication of this ‘expert’ audience often outweighing the potential financial gains of wider diffusion).

²⁰See p. 68.

²¹The opposite was of course true, with other musicians asserting that commercial acceptance and a better financial existence would have no effect on their music-making.

Some musicians were engaged in political work calling for increased funding, rehearsal space and even a dedicated arts centre which would host concerts, rehearsal rooms and offer teaching facilities. However, consensus on what this should be was rare,²² with many musicians expressing concern as to how such a venue should function, and ideologically opposed towards the kinds of hierarchical structures (boards, programmers) that might afford certain individuals more power than others and adversely affect the ‘free’ nature of the scene.

Many musicians and listeners expressed a fear that the scene, unless it became more united, might die out (especially in relation to gentrification and rising living costs in Berlin) and, despite the excellent work of *IG Jazz* and INM, chances for development were continually hindered by this lack of consensus, as well a general lack of public understanding of Improvised Music. There were also clear reasons to lobby the GEMA to take Improvised Music more seriously (to ensure better tariffs for Improvised Music that reflected the work, reflection and preparation shown in this thesis), but more pressing concerns (such as funding), a general suspicion of the organisation and, quite possibly, the fact that so-called ‘GEMA-cheats’ would potentially lose out in such a decision, also stalled such advances.

Despite these attempts, what seemed perhaps more likely, especially for a music with such specific conventions and requiring such engagement, was that the scene would continue to develop much as it was - a fertile meeting place for the restlessly creative, questioning and intensely idiosyncratic individuals that I met along my way, framed by fleeting interactions with more mainstream and institutionalised forms of culture. As one listener put it, remaining in the underground, but adding that, “different branches of their music are going to come up and bloom. Get bigger, maybe [make] a tree, or die out.”

How to summarise the Berlin Improvised Music scene in one sentence then?

Perhaps in the words of one listener and promoter, who described his esteemed musician colleagues, quite simply, as, “the secret gardeners, who give possible ways.”

²²Some suggested a self-sustaining model offering ‘experimental’ dance music events to fund more experimental performances with a smaller audience, whereas others considered it should be state-funded and offer an educational programme or the possibility for artistic residencies.

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Appendix A

SNA and Quantitative Methods: Further Methodology

This Appendix accompanies Chapter 4, providing a more complete methodology for the quantitative data collection used for this study, and detailing the contents of each database used in generating the results presented in Chapter 5.

Concerts, Bands, Sets and Venues

The first SPSS spreadsheet, which represents bands (or sets from each concert), and used the Echtzeitmusik.de website archive as a source,¹ recorded the following variables:

- Concert date
- Number of bands or sets
- Venue name
- List of participants

Musicians and venues were referenced by the line number assigned to them in the second and third database files detailed below, and the band/set was chosen as the unit of analysis in order to identify musicians who played together - not just those who might (or might not) have been socially connected by each event (this is of course less clear from the available data).

Concerts of large ensembles (over 12 people) were omitted, as were lectures, entirely composed music, installations and sound art (such as the *Ohrenhoch* series). This data does not account for collaborations and social connections that took place in private ‘sessions’, house concerts, or for concerts taking place outside of Berlin.

¹Undoubtably some performances will not have been included on the website, but in my experience the Echtzeitmusik site is widely acknowledged as being fairly exhaustive.

Music mixing elements of improvisation and composition were included, as were several concerts involving improvisation that might be considered on the borders of Improvised Music - bands such as The Still and Transmit (which border on pop/rock), concerts at Jazzkeller69 or Jazz an der Lohmühle (which border on more mainstream jazz), and performances by the Wandelweiser group (bordering on Neue Musik or contemporary classical music).

Venues hosting several nights with different names and promoters, such as Le Petit Mignon (which happened in Quiet Cue) and Basic Electricity, Salon Bruit, AUXXX and K77 Studio (which all took place in the Lichtblick Kino) were all collated by venue. The database of venues also collected address information in order to generate the map shown on Page 95.

Importing into UCINET

This data was then imported into UCINET [Borgatti et al., 2002] using ‘Piles’ (1-mode network) and ‘Nodelist 2’ (2-mode network) import options, later adding the Musicians database as attributes and using UCINET to generate centrality, homophily and ego network constitution data, as well as produce the diagrams shown in Chapter 5. All numerical results were error corrected (missing values omitted).

In order to calculate measures for the 2-mode network (not directly possible using the 2-mode functions of UCINET), the file was converted to a 1-node network containing both venues and participants, with attributes for each venue left blank so as not to affect the outcome. This was something of a get-around to calculate ego net composition for the venues themselves, which works because UCINET does not include the ego itself in its analysis.

Musicians

Biographical data was collected from musicians’ websites, Facebook, Soundcloud and Myspace accounts, and online biographies (used for concert promotion), to create an attribute database for SNA and to identify basic demographics of the scene.

Where possible, data was cross-checked against as many sources as possible, and musicians’ own websites, Myspace and Soundcloud accounts were prioritised over concert listings and Wikipedia entries (deemed less reliable).

Where no information was available fields were left blank, however, in a few cases (and where I knew participants personally) dates of birth and arrival in Berlin were estimated. I estimate these dates to be correct within 1 year, and these values are marked with an asterix in the ‘Source’ column of the SPSS file.

The following variables were recorded:

- First instrument
- Second instrument
- Country of origin (coded using ISO 3 numeric codes)²
- Year of birth
- Resident in Berlin
- Year moved to Berlin
- Born in Berlin
- University level education
- Studied music at university/conservatoire/higher education level³
- Self-taught/Auto-Didact
- Has own website
- Uses own Twitter, Facebook, blog, Soundcloud, Reverbnation etc.

The following interests, courses of study, and experiences (past and present) were also noted:

- Sound art, sound design, *Klangkunst*, field recording
- Composition (any style of music)
- Neue Musik, contemporary classical, avant-garde (composed) classical music (as composer or interpreter)
- Electronic music or work with electronics
- Drone, industrial, ambient, noise
- Jazz and/or Free Jazz
- Rock, pop, ‘world’ music
- Theatre, dance, spoken word
- Painting, video, live visuals, other forms of visual art
- Instrument Building
- Running concerts or record label
- Publishing/writing written critical/theoretical texts about music

²Members of the DDR jazz scene have been coded 278. Younger musicians (those born after 1989 or whose professional lives began after 1989 have been coded as 276 (German). While some may regard this as problematic, this was in the interests of creating distinctions in musical/professional life in 2012/13.

³Music Technology is included under this heading.

As described already, this data was then analysed directly in SPSS, and imported into UCINET as an attribute file, in order to interrogate the demographics of Berlin's Improvised Music social network in 2012.

Appendix B

Diagrams from Social Network Analysis

Further Social Network Analysis diagrams, as an Appendix to Chapter 5. All images were generated using UCINET [Borgatti et al., 2002].

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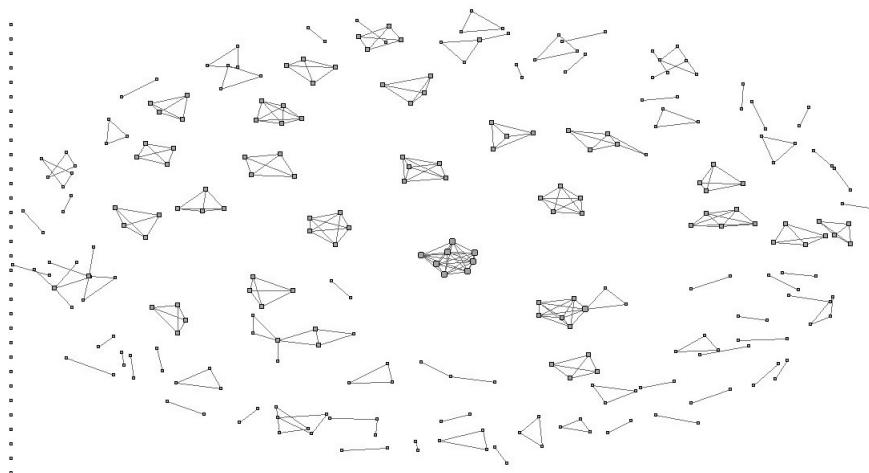


Figure B.1: Social network of Improvised Music in Berlin, peripheral collaborations, expanded, node size set by degree centrality.

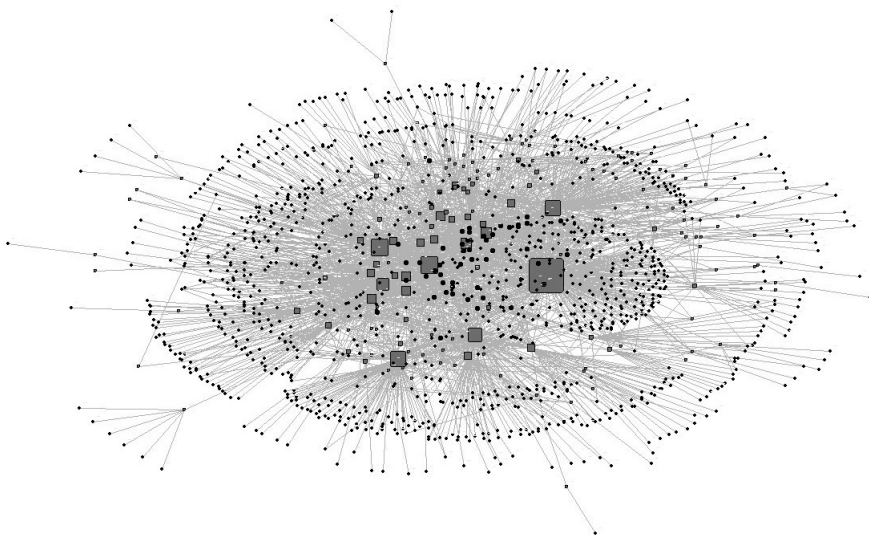


Figure B.2: Entire 2-mode social network of Improvised Music in Berlin: participants (circles) connected by venues (square boxes), main component, node size set by degree centrality.

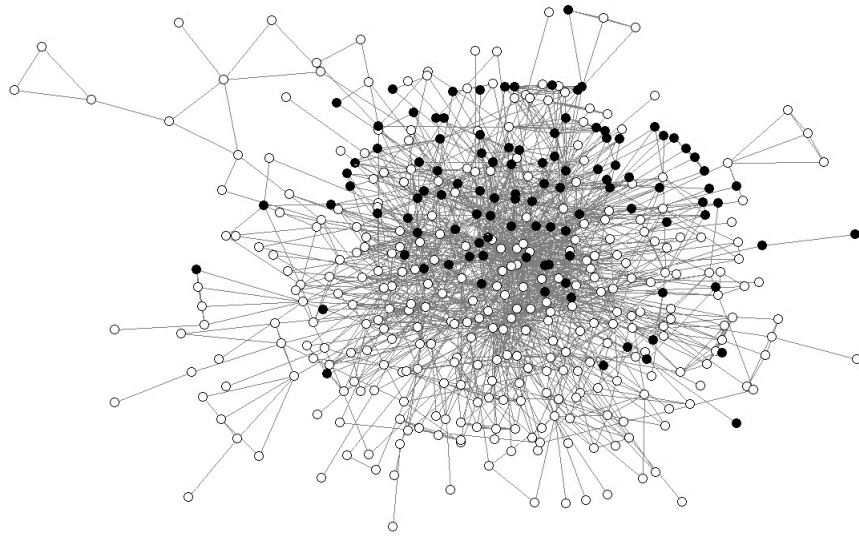


Figure B.3: Those with interests in jazz, Berlin residents only.

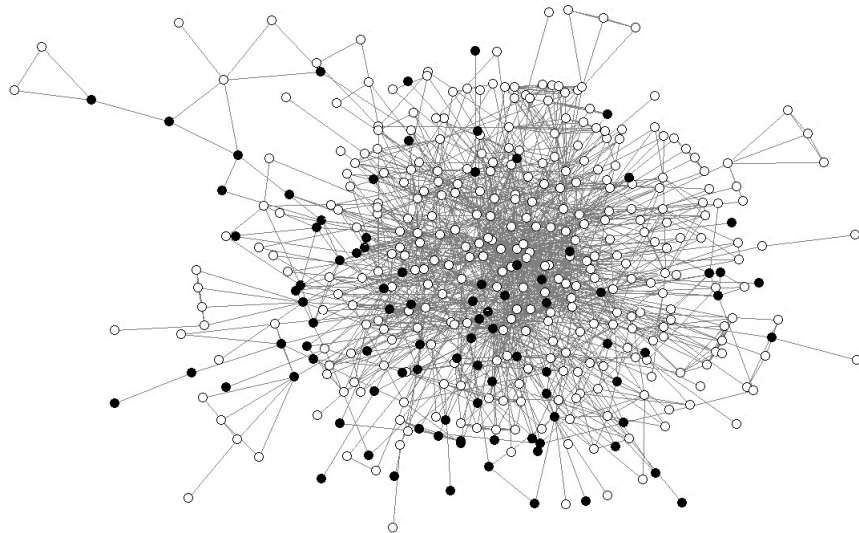


Figure B.4: Those using electronics, Berlin residents only.

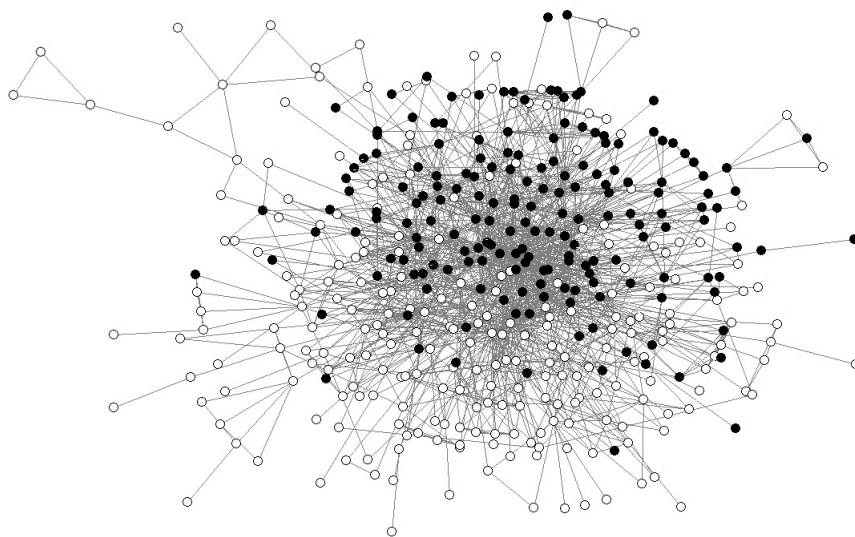


Figure B.5: German participants with interests in jazz, Berlin residents only.

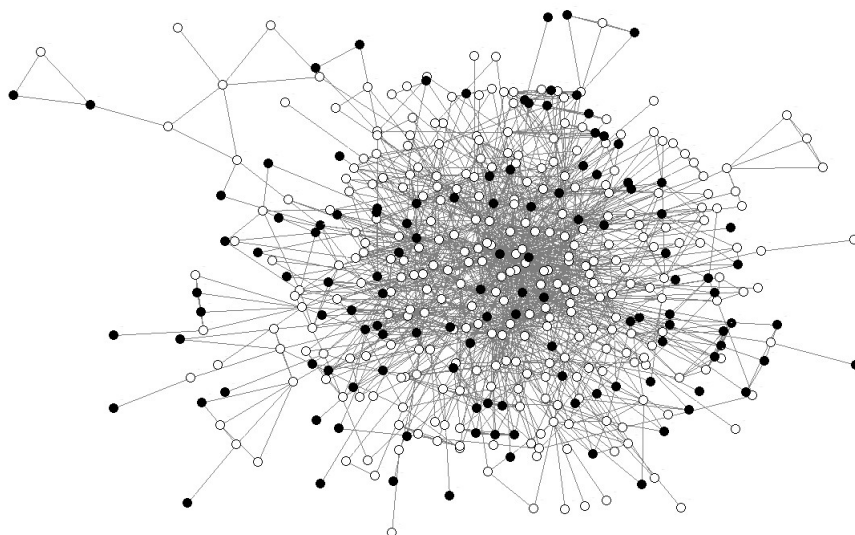


Figure B.6: Those with interests in Neue Musik, Berlin residents only.

Appendix C

Political Work in Berlin 2012-13

As an Appendix to Chapter 5, this Appendix provides a brief background to the political work happening in Berlin's Improvised Music scene during 2012 and 2013.

The two main bodies representing Improvised Music in this time were *Initiative Neue Musik Berlin e.V.* (INM, 80+ members),¹ who, since 1991, represented musicians from the Echtzeitmusik community under the banner of “the free scene of new music”,² and the association *IG Jazz Berlin e.V.* (160-180 members), formed in late 2011, to represent the jazz/Free Jazz/Improvised Music community in the same way.

Whilst INM was funded by Berlin's *Senatskanzlei für Kulturelle Angelegenheiten*'s *E-Musik* department, and *IG Jazz* by the *U-Musik* section,³ in 2012, the two organisations came together under the banner *Dach/Musik - Freie Musikszene Berlin*⁴

¹e.V. stands for *eingetragener Verein* - a registered association.

²The term ‘Free Scene’ (*freie Szene*, or independent scene) is used to distinguish the activities of these musicians and artists from official/institutionalised structures such as the *Berliner Philharmoniker*, *Konzerthaus* or *Staatsoper*.

³See p. 73 for more information on these definitions. The *Senatskanzlei für Kulturelle Angelegenheiten* (hereafter ‘Senat’) is Berlin's state regional office for cultural affairs. INM was almost unanimously respected and admired among improvising musicians of the Echtzeitmusik scene in particular, and in addition to the differences in funding sources (*E-* and *U-Musik*), both INM and the jazz scene distributed their budgets through a rotating jury system (juries were mainly comprised of musicians and organisers from the scene itself). INM administered their finances directly, whereas the money for jazz was administered by Uwe Sandhop (responsible for Jazz/World Music/Rock/Pop) at the Senat. Whilst most had respect for the work of Sandhop, there were several problems for musicians with the existing system, and a secondary motivation for forming *IG Jazz* was to eventually attract enough funding to transfer the distribution of funds to the association itself, using the model proposed by INM. Over the course of fieldwork, several musicians complained about existing funding deadlines (which meant that there was considerably more activity in certain periods of the year), the fact that performers often received only half or one third of the funding they needed to realise a project (but were expected to carry out the project anyway), and that it was difficult to use the money for touring or international projects.

⁴*Dach* means ‘roof’ and the title implies being under one roof. In 2012 *Dach/Musik* was comprised of representatives of Echtzeitmusik Berlin, Neue Musik festival MaerzMusik, the sound art project Singuhr

to campaign for higher funding, as well as to protest against the Senat's proposal to hand over all *U-Musik* funding, including jazz, to a newly formed Music Board (intended to reflect organisations such as the *Medienboard Berlin Brandenburg*).⁵

At the time, the main contender for the administration of this board was the Berlin Music Commission (BMC), an association with a strong emphasis on popular music, and which described itself as “from all areas of the music business including live entertainment, music software, club culture, recorded music and music media”, and whose main aim was to “combine the marketing activities of our members, strengthen them and communicate them to the outside world via marketing and promotion campaigns” [BMC, 2014b, BMC, 2014a].

It was feared by many jazz and improvising musicians, however, that such an organisation would predominantly serve the interests of Berlin's popular and ‘club’ music sectors, and also that, with the scene as it stood in 2012, that marketing was not what they needed.⁶ The general feeling among musicians was that, had this change gone ahead, decisions affecting the distribution of funds for jazz and Improvised Music would have been handed over to those perceived as having more interest in marketing than in content, to a corporation suspected of having economic rather than artistic interests at heart, and to those deemed to have insufficient knowledge of the activities and ideologies of the scene.⁷

In 2012-13, *IG Jazz* succeeded in retaining the budget for jazz independent of the BMC, and *Dach/Musik* lobbied for the 2011 budget of €842,000 for jazz and INM to be doubled,⁸ in order to pay for dedicated rehearsal spaces, fully equipped performance spaces, offices and co-operations with recording studios, as well as the creation of several part-time jobs to cover marketing, PR, and technical and artistic directors (this request was turned down).

Also in 2012, *IG Jazz* and INM, under the banner of *Dach/Musik*, were incorporated in the founding of the *Koalition der freien Szene* (KdFS, the Coalition of the Independent Scene) - an association comprised of representatives from the independent scenes of visual arts, dance, theatre and independent theatre who campaigned that 50% of Berlin's

e. V., alternative Pop-Plattform amSTART, the venue Ausland (Gregor Hotz) and Club Transmediale (Festival for Adventurous Music and Art) [Gottstein and Schick, 2012].

⁵The *Medienboard Berlin Brandenburg* supports the film industry in Berlin the surrounding region of Brandenburg. The total budget for *U-Musik* was estimated to be between €300,000-400,000, and the Berlin Music Commission proposed taking over the Senat's *U-Musik* budget as part of a total package worth €1 million (which it eventually received nonetheless).

⁶Instead the need was for more funding and better infrastructure.

⁷Whilst, owing to its status as *E-Musik*, INM would not be immediately affected by this change, according to one interviewee, they did see problems with the proposed BMC model further down the line, also wary of more business-led approaches to arts funding.

⁸In 2011, €147,000 was allocated to jazz, and €239,000 to INM [Gottstein and Schick, 2012]. By means of comparison, Berlin's three main opera houses receive something in the region of €120m each year [Senatskanzlei: Kulturelle Angelegenheiten, 2012].

proposed City Tax⁹ should go to them (a request that was turned down). KdFS also demanded a structure equal to that of the ‘official’ institutionalised visual arts, the provision of new venues and cultural centres (in Berlin’s many still-empty state-owned spaces), and a minimum wage for artists equivalent to the *Intermittents du Spectacle* in France.¹⁰

The leading protagonists of this movement were musicians Uli Kempendorff, Marc Schmolling and Ignaz Schick, arts professional Melanie Rossmann (of the agency *Aufklang*), and journalist/writer Björn Gottstein, and all of their work was carried out for no financial reward. Schick and Gottstein stepped out during the period of my fieldwork, to be replaced by Klaus Schoepp and Christian Kesten (representing INM), and Bettina Bohle, Nikolaus Neuser, Florian Bergmann and Jonas Schön joined from the side of *IG Jazz*. Whilst many on the side of INM knew and respected the organisation, far fewer jazz-related musicians knew what the much younger *IG Jazz* was, or stood for (despite being members), and fewer still were actively involved with such political work.

Awareness of the local scene among Berlin’s politicians was also felt to be very low - Ignaz Schick and Björn Gottstein were thought to be the first representatives of the independent music scene to appear for some 20 years before the *Kulturausschuss* (the cultural committee that meets in Parliament once a week),¹¹ and in other meetings, musicians despaired at politicians in leading cultural roles who appeared to have little-to-no local awareness and only basic cultural knowledge.¹²

Despite these initial disappointments, however, by the time I was writing up this thesis in late 2014, talks had become easier (also as a result of political reshuffles), higher funding had been secured for jazz (€200,000) and the Senat were set to support the project *3 Raum Produktionen* - a complex of purpose-built rehearsal and recording facilities in Prenzlauer Berg, due to open in 2015.

⁹A charge of €1 per night levied on all tourists visiting Berlin.

¹⁰The topic of a state sponsored minimum wage for all professions was a popular topic in German politics in general during this period, and the full list of demands from the KdFS were published in an online petition [Knoch et al., 2012]. The founding of the KdFS was also brought about the scandal of Jürgen Flimm, director of the *Staatsoper* (one of Berlin’s main opera companies), who allegedly obtained €215,000 from the *Hauptstadt Kultur Fonds* without a jury and entirely outside of the normal protocol of applying for support [Walter, 2011].

¹¹It was suggested that to make such a presentation was more common in other branches such as theatre and dance.

¹²The head of Berlin’s Cultural Committee, Frank Jahnke, a maths and physics graduate, appeared to be almost entirely unaware of the local scene, instead spending a considerably portion of the meeting extolling the virtues of the Kurfürstendamm Theatres (something like London’s West End) before asking “Ah, new music? That’s like Schoenberg or what?”

Appendix D

Echtzeit Composition: Scores from The International Nothing

As an Appendix to Chapter 9, the following photos (reprinted with permission, and taken by Thieke himself) are examples of Michael Thieke's clarinet parts from the duo *The International Nothing*.

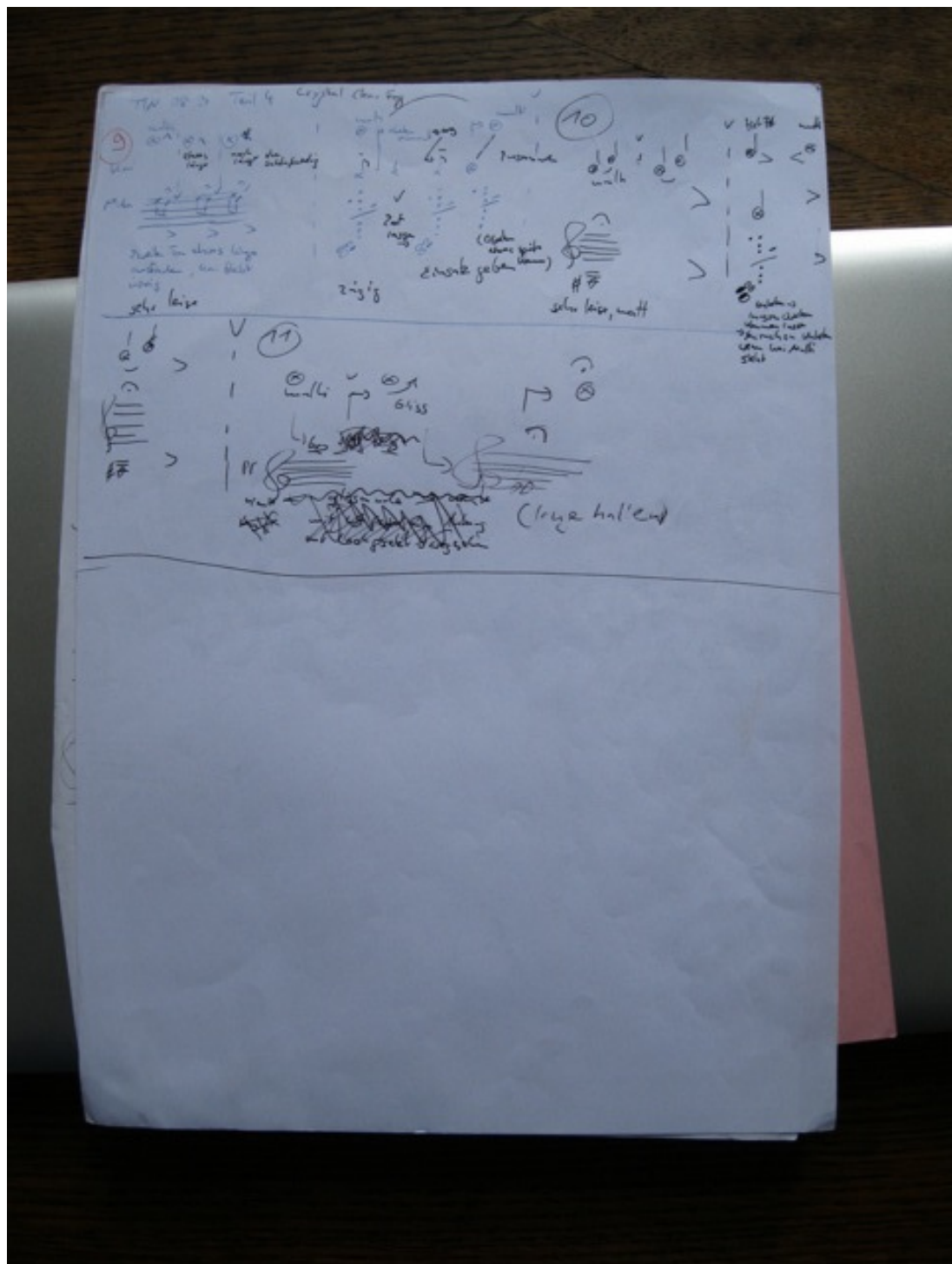
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Handwritten musical score on a piece of paper, titled "TIN 086 Teil 2 03.1.08". The score is written in German and includes musical notation for two staves, labeled "Kai" and "Mick".

The score is divided into several sections, with handwritten notes and markings:

- Section 1:** Features musical notation for "Kai" and "Mick". Notes include "Kai: ③", "Mick: ③", and "Mick: ③". There are also notes like "Kai: ③", "Mick: ③", and "Mick: ③".
- Section 2:** Includes musical notation for "Kai" and "Mick". Notes include "Kai: ③", "Mick: ③", and "Mick: ③". There are also notes like "Kai: ③", "Mick: ③", and "Mick: ③".
- Section 3:** Includes musical notation for "Kai" and "Mick". Notes include "Kai: ③", "Mick: ③", and "Mick: ③". There are also notes like "Kai: ③", "Mick: ③", and "Mick: ③".
- Section 4:** Includes musical notation for "Kai" and "Mick". Notes include "Kai: ③", "Mick: ③", and "Mick: ③". There are also notes like "Kai: ③", "Mick: ③", and "Mick: ③".
- Section 5:** Includes musical notation for "Kai" and "Mick". Notes include "Kai: ③", "Mick: ③", and "Mick: ③". There are also notes like "Kai: ③", "Mick: ③", and "Mick: ③".
- Section 6:** Includes musical notation for "Kai" and "Mick". Notes include "Kai: ③", "Mick: ③", and "Mick: ③". There are also notes like "Kai: ③", "Mick: ③", and "Mick: ③".
- Section 7:** Includes musical notation for "Kai" and "Mick". Notes include "Kai: ③", "Mick: ③", and "Mick: ③". There are also notes like "Kai: ③", "Mick: ③", and "Mick: ③".
- Section 8:** Includes musical notation for "Kai" and "Mick". Notes include "Kai: ③", "Mick: ③", and "Mick: ③". There are also notes like "Kai: ③", "Mick: ③", and "Mick: ③".
- Section 9:** Includes musical notation for "Kai" and "Mick". Notes include "Kai: ③", "Mick: ③", and "Mick: ③". There are also notes like "Kai: ③", "Mick: ③", and "Mick: ③".
- Section 10:** Includes musical notation for "Kai" and "Mick". Notes include "Kai: ③", "Mick: ③", and "Mick: ③". There are also notes like "Kai: ③", "Mick: ③", and "Mick: ③".

The score is written in a cursive, handwritten style, with various musical symbols and notes. The paper is aged and shows some wear.



Appendix E

Alphabetical List of Groups and Bands, Berlin 2012-13

This Appendix lists, in alphabetical order, the regular bands and groups referenced in this thesis, and performing in Berlin during 2012 and 2013.

Activity Center	Burkhard Beins (percussion and strings) Michael Renkel (strings and percussion)
Barcelona Series	Axel Dörner (trumpet) Andrea Neumann (inside piano) Sven-Åke Johansson (percussion)
Booklet	Tobias Delius (tenor saxophone, clarinet) Joe Williamson (bass) Steve Heather (drums)
Christian Lillinger's Grund	Christian Lillinger (drums) Jonas Westergaard (bass) Robert Landfermann (bass) Tobias Delius (tenor saxophone, clarinet) Wanja Slavin (reeds)
Cool Quartet	Sven-Åke Johansson (drums) Axel Dörner (trumpet) Jan Roder (bass) Zoran Terzic (piano)
Dell-Westergaard-Lillinger	Christopher Dell (vibraphone) Jonas Westergaard (bass) Christian Lillinger (drums)

Der Lange Schatten	Michael Thieke (clarinet) Håvard Wiik (piano) Antonio Borghini (bass)
Der Rote Bereich	Frank Möbus (guitar) Christian Weidner (alto sax) Oli Steidle (drums) Formerly with: Rudi Mahall (bass clarinet) John Schröder (drums)
Die Anreicherung	Axel Dörner (trumpet) Håvard Wiik (piano) Jan Roder (bass) Christian Lillinger (drums)
Die Dicken Finger	Olaf Rupp (guitar) Jan Roder (bass) Oli Steidle (drums)
Die Enttäuschung	Axel Dörner (trumpet) Rudi Mahall (bass clarinet, clarinet) Jan Roder (bass) Uli Jennessen (drums)
Dok Wallach	Michael Thieke (clarinet, alto sax) Daniel Erdmann (tenor sax, baritone sax) Johannes Fink (bass) Heinrich Köbberling (drums)
Grapeshade	Biliana Voutchkova (violin, voice) Klaus Janek (bass, electronics) Ingo Reulecke (movement, dance) Katharina Meves (movement, dance)
Grünen	Achim Kaufmann (piano) Robert Landfermann (bass) Christian Lillinger (drums)
Haman Quintet	Anna Kaluza (saxophone) Alison Blunt (violin) Niko Meinhold (piano) Horst Nonnenmacher (bass) Manuel Miethe (saxophone)
Hook Line and Sinker	Axel Dörner (trumpet) Tobias Delius (tenor saxophone, clarinet) Tristan Honsinger (cello) Antonio Borghini (bass)
Hotelgaeste	Michael Thieke (clarinet, zither, amplified bottom resonator) Derek Shirley (bass) Dave Bennett (guitar)

Hyperactive Kid	Philipp Gropper (tenor sax) Ronny Graupe (guitar) Christian Lillinger (drums)
Kaluza Quartet	Anna Kaluza (saxophone) Christoph Thewes (trombone) Jan Roder (bass) Oli Steidle (drums)
Les Femmes Savantes	Sabine Ercklentz (trumpet, electronics, composition) Hanna Hartman (objects, electronics, composition) Andrea Neumann (inside piano, mixing desk, composition) Ana Maria Rodriguez (electronics, composition) Ute Wassermann (voice, bird calls, resonating objects, composition)
Manunkind	Almut Kühne (voice) Michael Thieke (clarinet) Gerhard Gschlößl (trombone) Giorgio Pacorig (piano) Antonio Borghini (bass, composition)
Mensch Mensch Mensch	Liz Allbee (trumpet, conches, electronics) Burkhard Beins (percussion, electronics)
Monk's Casino	Axel Dörner (trumpet) Rudi Mahall (bass clarinet, clarinet) Jan Roder (bass) Uli Jennessen (drums) Alexander von Schlippenbach (piano)
Mrs Conception	Axel Dörner (trumpet) Tobias Delius (tenor saxophone, clarinet) Jan Roder (bass) Steve Heather (drums)
PerloneX	Burkhard Beins (percussion, objects) Ignaz Schick (turntables, live-electronics) Jörg Maria Zeger (electric guitars)
Phosphor	Axel Dörner (trumpet, electronics) Burkhard Beins (percussion) Andrea Neumann (inside piano, mixing desk) Annette Krebs (electro-acoustic guitar) Robin Hayward (tuba) Ignaz Schick (live electronics) Michael Renkel (acoustic guitar) Formerly with: Alesandro Bosetti (soprano saxophone)

Pivot	Chris Heenan (contrabass clarinet) Liz Allbee (trumpet, conches)
Polwechsel (2013 version)	Burkhard Beins (drums, percussion) Martin Brandlmeyer (drums, percussion) Werner Däfeldecker (double bass) Michael Moser (cello)
Rupp-Mahall-Jennessen	Rudi Mahall (bass clarinet, clarinet) Olaf Rupp (guitar) Uli Jennessen (drums)
Rhythm Complication and Brass	Clayton Thomas (bass) Burkhard Beins (drums, percussion) Liz Allbee (trumpet, conches) Matthias Müller (trombone) Hilary Jeffery (trombone) Robin Hayward (tuba)
SINK	Arthur Rother (guitar) Andrea Ermke (electronics, minidisks) Chris Abrahams (keyboards, electronics) Marcelo Busato (drums)
TAM	Matthias Müller (trombone) Olaf Rupp (guitar) Rudi Fischerlehner (drums)
The Ames Room	Clayton Thomas (bass) Jean-Luc Guinnonet (sax) Will Guthrie (drums)
The Astronomic Unit	Clayton Thomas (bass) Matthias Müller (trombone) Christian Marien (drums)
The International Nothing	Michael Thieke (clarinet) Kai Fagashinski (clarinet)
The Magic I.D.	Kai Fagashinski (clarinet) Margareth Kammerer (guitar, vocals) Christof Kurzmann (laptop, vocals) Michael Thieke (clarinet)
The Pitch	Michael Thieke (clarinet) Boris Baldschun (organ) Koen Nutters (bass) Morten J Olsen (vibraphone, percussion)
The Still	Rico Repotente (guitar) Derek Shirley (bass) Steve Heather (drums)

Tobias Delius 4tet	Tobias Delius (tenor saxophone, clarinet) Tristan Honsinger (cello) Joe Williamson (bass) Han Bennink (drums)
Transmit	Tony Buck (drums, guitar) Magda Mayas (organ, piano) James Welburn (bass) Brendan Doughety (drums)
Trigger	Matthias Müller (trombone) Nils Ostendorf (trumpet) Chris Heenan (contrabass clarinet)
Trio Aus	Johannes Bauer (trombone) Clayton Thomas (bass) Tony Buck (drums)
TUB (The Understated Brown)	Steve Heather (drums) Boris Hauf (saxophone, synthesizer) Thomas Meadowcroft (organ)
Weird Weapons	Olaf Rupp (guitar) Joe Williamson (bass) Tony Buck (drums)

Appendix F

Alphabetical List of Improvised Music Venues, Berlin 2012

Source: www.echtzeitmusik.de

-able	Bibliothek am	ExRotaprint Kantine
‘A Salon’ ¹	Luisenbad	Fabrik Potsdam
8mm Bar	Blue Allert	FEED Soundspace
Ä Programmwirtschaft	Café Tasso	Festsaal Kreuzberg
Ackerstadtpalast	Cafe Niesen	Fincan
Acud	Central Rixdorf	Freiluftkino Pompeji
Altes Bahnhofshalle	Club der Polnischen	Friedenskirche
Friedenau	Versager	Charlottenburg
Altes Finanzamt	Collegium Hungaricum	Galerie B1
Antje Øklesund	Continuum at	Galerie Flächenland
Artroom	Bethanien	Galerie Haus am
Atelier Katharina	Corpo 6	Lützowplatz
Karrenberg	Das Lokal	Galerie Mario Mazzoli
Atelier Überall	Die Teilnahmerei	Galerie Parterre
Atelier 52170	Die Taste Klaviersalon	Galerie Zeitzone
Atelier A. Herard	Dienstbar	Gelegenheiten
Atelierhaus	Direktorenhaus	Gelegenheiten
Ausland	Dock 11	Grüntaler 9
B Flat	Elitäre Zelle West	Hau 2
Babette	Emmaus Kirche	HBC
Badenscher Hof	Engels	Heinz Schüftan
Ballhaus Ost	Ermitter19	Institut Francais
Bar Marlena	Errant Bodies	Jazz an der Lohmühle
Bei Maria Mitte	Eschloraque	Jazzkeller 69
Bei Roy	Exil	Kapelle Alter
Berlin Hauptbahnhof	Exploratorium	Marien-Nikolaifriedhof

¹This was not the name of the venue, but anonymity was requested by its owners.

Kapelle Friedhof der Friedrichswerderschen Gemeinde	Multiversal Studio Museum der Unerhörten Dinge	St. Annen Kirche, Zepernick Strahler Raum
KHQ Galerie	Musikinstrumenten Museum	Studioboerne45 Sucked Orange Galerie
King Kong Club	Naher Osten Naherholung Sternchen	Tamtam Art Tanzfabrik
Kirchhof Luisenstadt I	NK	Terzo Mondo
Klangwerkstatt	O Tannenbaum	The Great Heisenberg
Kulturhaus Karlshorst	O.T. Bar	The Zone
Kunstfabrik Schlot	Oh Là Là	Theaterforum
Kunstraum Tapir	Panda Theater	Kreuzberg
Kuss Kuss	Park Inn	Theaterhaus Berlin
L'Origine du Monde	Passionskirche	Theaterkahn
La Cueva	Kreuzberg	Theaterkapelle
Labor Gras	Piatto Forte	Tilsiter Lichtspiele
Laborsonor at KuLe	Picnicrecords - Das	Ufer Studios
Lagari	Musiklabor	Valentin Stüberl
LEAP (Lab for Electronic Arts and Performance)	Pink Melon Joy	Van Speyck
Lichtblick Kino ²	Prinzessingarten	Wabe
Liebig 12	Quiet Cue	Waldo Bar
Loophole	Radialsystem V	Welcome Spring
lorch + seidel Galerie	Rumpsti Pumpsti	Wendel
Madame Claude	Schillerpalais	WerkStadt Berlin
Mainzelmenschen	Schokoladen	West Germany
Malena Bar	Secret Sounds	Wortwedding
Marquee	Senatsreservenspeicher	XLAB
Mastul	Shakespeare & Sons	Zatopek
Mindpirates	Shanglhangl	ZMF zur Möbelfabrik
Vereinsheim	SHOXXXBOXXX	Zum Goldenen Hahn
Misirlou Bar	Sopheinsaele	
Monarch	Sowieso	
Multilayerladen		

²Lichtblick Kino hosted concert series including Salon Bruit, K77, AUXXX and Basic Electricity.

Appendix G

Alphabetical List of Performers, Berlin 2012

Source: www.echtzeitmusik.de

821	Tobias Backhaus	Francesco Bigoni
Cristina Abati	Pierre-Antoine Badaroux	Bene Bindewald
Elisa Abela	Joachim Badenhorst	Vidal Bini
Peter Ablinger	Roberto Badoglio	Ravi Binning
Chris Abrahams	Serge Baghdassarians	Giuseppe Birardi
G. Dilek Acay	Alex Bailey	David Birchall
Tomomi Adachi	Aidan Baker	Charly Birkenhauer
Sophie Agnel	Marco Baldini	Anthony Bisset
Marcelo Aguirre	Boris Baltschun	Piero Bittolo Bon
A.L. <i>aka</i> Andre Lange	Ritwik Bannerjee	Sindre Bjerga
Kathy Alberici <i>aka</i> Bocca al	Maxine Bannerji	Josh Blackmore
Lupo	Giulia Barba	Bacchus Blake
Roland Albrecht	Davide Barbarino	Neil Blandford
Pierre Alexandre Tremblay	Barberos	bldy
Liz Allbee	Jürg Bariletti	Stephan Bleier
Daniel Allen Oberto	Richard Barrett	Frédéric Blondy
Valentin Altenberger	Andre Bartetzki	Martin Blume
Laura Altmann	Anna Barth	Alison Blunt
Michael Ammann	Michael Barthel	Kim Bo-Sung
Kristin Andersen	Jiri Bartovanec	Maxime Bobo
Natasha Anderson	Baryt	Alexey Bobrovsky
Akira Ando	Johannes Bauer	Alberto Boccardi
Saori Ando	Matthias Bauer	Ian Boddy
Pedro André	Conny Bauer	Uli Boettcher
Max Andrzejewski	Simon Bauer	Pauline Boeykens
Antonis Anissegos	Moritz Baumgärtner	Kajsa Bohlin
Thomas Ankersmit	Alex Bayer	Cyril Bondi
Mary Ann Kiefer	Rashad Becker	Julian Bonequi
Sheik Anorak	Hinrich Beermann	Johanna Borchert
Antez	Ali Beierbach	Pierre Borel
Wlodek Antoni	Burkhard Beins	David Borges
Sigbjørn Apeland	Andrea Belfi <i>aka</i> KMP-Zwei	Antonio Borghini
Yoko Arai	Ilia Belorukov	Thomas Borgmann
Jochen Arbeit	William Bennet <i>aka</i> Cut Hands	Alexei Borisov
Pelayo F. Arrizabalaga	Dave Bennett	Alessandro Bosetti
Tom Arthurs	Merle Bennett	Eelco Bosman
Utar Artun	Han Bennink	Ole Boston
Wizard Ashdod	Sean Bergin	Carla Bozulich
Adam Asnan	Florian Bergmann	Jens Brand
Gilles Aubry	Johannes Bergmark	Martin Brandlmeyr
Paul Audoynaud	Philip Bernhardt	Kjetil Brandsal
Ayaka Azechi	Maria Bertel	Micah Brashear
Ibrahim Baba Dango	Loïc Bertrand	Patrick Braun
Alexandre Babel	Sebastian Berweck	Jesse Braverman
Francesca Baccolini	Antoine Beuger	Anthony Braxton
Ofir Bachmutzky	Biblo	Michael Breitenbach

Falk Breitzkreuz	Jon Cohen <i>aka</i> The Jon Cohen	Alex Ehlers
Olie Brice	Experimental	Ekkehard Ehlers
Mathias Bröde	Ned Colette	Peter Ehwald
Monika Brooks	Alberto Collodel	Dietrich Eichmann
Andrew Brooks	Diana Combo	Petter Eldh
Caspar Brötzmann	M. Comes	Electronicpresskit
Peter Brötzmann	Clare Cooper	Emme!
Andie Brown <i>aka</i> These Feathers Have	Sidney Corbett	Sato Endo
Plumes	Nestor Corbut	Angie Eng
Alexander Bruck	Chris Corsano	Alessandra Eramo
Kyle Bruckman	Guylaine Cosseron	Anil Eraslan
Winnie Brückner	William “Bilwa” Costa	Sara Ercoli
Andreas Brunn	Carlé Costa	Daniel Erdmann
Markus Brunn	Cooper Crain <i>aka</i> Bitchin’	Oya Erdogan
Lucas Brunnert	Bayas	Korhan Erel
Laurent Bruttin	George Cremaschi	ERikm
Richard Bruzek	Rosalind Crisp	Sabine Erklentz
Steve Buchanan	Patrick Crossland	Mats Erlandsson
Thomas Büchel	Kevin Crump <i>aka</i> Roman	Andrea Ermke
Tony Buck	Pilates	Edivaldo Ernesto
Hannes Buder	Peter Cusack	Gülsah Erol
Wendelin Buechler	D’Incise	Errorsmith
Cammissa Buerhaus	Werner Dafeldecker	Mischa G. Esch
Gregory Buettner	Chris Dahlgren	Peter Evans
Elia Buletti <i>aka</i> Delmore FX	Tim Daisy	Jon Evans
Christian Burchard	Cyril Darmedru	Kai Fagaschinski
Jonas Burgwinkel	Davidly	Bernard Falaise
Matthieu Burner	Rainer Davies	Dug Falk
Sheri Burt	Angharad Davies	John Farah
Marcello Busato	Aaron Dawson	Thea Farhadian
Stevko Busch	Mario de Vega	Dario Fariello
Nicolas Bussmann	Kay Degner	Sebastian Fäth
John Butcher	Gil Delindro <i>aka</i> Delindro	Steffen Faul
Valentin Butt	Tobias Delius	Rui Faustino
Anthea Caddy	Christopher Dell	Roberto Fega
Nino Callego	Jim Denley	Mark Fell
Simon Camatta	Bertrand Denzler	David Fenech
Joris Camelin	Louise Desbrusses	Cedrik Fermont <i>aka</i> C-Drik
Roy Campbell	Tobias Dettbarn	Renato Ferreira
Jim Campbell <i>aka</i> The	Gabriel Dharmoo	Aurélien Ferrette
Preterite	Theodor Di Ricco	Stefano Ferrian
Alberto de Campo	Felipe Dias De	Roland Fidezius
Mario Campos	Ray Dickaty	Gerald Fiebig
Mehmet Can özer	Dieb13 <i>aka</i> Dieter Kovacic	Lothar Fiedler
Jefre Cantu-Ledesma	Maria Diekmann	Andy Fierens
Martin Capatinta	Yorgos Dimitriadis	Klaus Filip
Lucio Capece	Dingy Dysu <i>aka</i> Daisuke	Johannes Fink
Joseph Capriglione <i>aka</i>	Imamura	Michael Fischer
GuN_soLo	DJ Insultor	Rudi Fischerlehner
Jadi Carboni	Vicent Domenech	David Fiuczynski
Roy Carroll	George Donchev	Mike Flemming
Arturo Castro	Michel Doneda	Birgitta Flick
Francesco Cavaliere	Andreas Dormann	Thibault Florent
Alberto Cavenati	Axel Dörner	Floros Floridis
Scott Cazan	Brendan Dougherty	Martin Flotzinger
Isaiah Ceccarelli	Ian Douglas-Moore	Asi Föcker <i>aka</i> asiplus
Charlotte Cegarra	David Dove	Joe Fonda
Cell Infadel	Stephen Doyle	Jérôme Fouquet
Diego Chamy	Drén	Nathaniel Fowler
Johnny Chang	Erik Drescher	Marco Fox
Conor Chaplin	Dirk Dresselhaus <i>aka</i> Schneider	Alexander Frangenheim
Marjolaine Charbin	TM	Heather Frasch
Xavier Charles	Andrew Drury	Stefan Fraunberger
Audrey Chen	Benjamin Duboc	Moss Freed
Tuia Chericci	Michal Dudek	Reinhold Friedl
Neneh Cherry	John Duncan	Johann Friedrich Wendorf
Antoine Chessex	Maya Dunietz	Jule Frierl
Hayden Chisholm	Bastian Dunker	Birte Fuchs
Liliane Chlela	Bryan Dunleavy	Limpe Fuchs
Greta Christensen	Isabelle Duthoit	Mushimaru Fujieda
Günter Christmann	Antoine Duykers	Masayoshi Fujita <i>aka</i> El Fog
Arsène Cimbar	Jason Dylan Arseneault	Fujiyuki
Seby Ciurcina	Marcin Dymiter <i>aka</i> Emiteer	Christoph Funabashi
Jen Clare Paulson	Andreas Dzialocha	Leo Gallagher
Raphael Clarkson	Silke Eberhard	Christoph Gallio
Ingvo Clauser	Isak Edberg	Gandoola oond Krapoola
Tim Coehoorn	Andreas Edelmann	Miguel A. García
Anat Cohavi	Clement Edouard	Ximena Garnica
Greg Cohen	John Edwards	Solène Garnier

Susanna Gartmayer	Leila Hassan	itsnbits
Bertrand Gauguet	Hans Hassler	Rafal Iwanski <i>aka</i> X-NAVI:ET
Dominik Gawara	Anton Hatwich	Charlotte Jacke
Friederike Gawenda	Boris Hauf	Anja Jacobsen
Gerold Genssler	Alex Hawkins	Gerri Jaeger
Alba Gentili-Tedeschi	Robin Hayward	Simon James Phillips
Wolfgang Georgsdorf	Charles Hayward	Klaus Janek
Antonin Gerbal	Steve Heather <i>aka</i> Stiff Leather	Klaudia Jarecka
Philipp Gerschlauer	Florian Hecker	Wouter Jaspers <i>aka</i> Franz
Thomas Gerwin	Chris Heenan	Fjodor
Panos Ghikas	Boris D Hegenbart	Hilary Jeffery
Yedo Gibson	Alexandru Hegyesi <i>aka</i> Nu & Apa	JenaMu6
Marcela Giesche	Neagră	Uli Jennessen
Carlos Giffoni	Günter Heinz	Olympia Jensen
Alice Gift <i>aka</i> Velvet Condom	Julius Heise	Karl Heinz Jeron
Uri Gincel	Johannes Held	Kjetil Jerve
Agathe Gizard	Israel Heller	Jesus is Angry
Frode Gjerstad	Sonja Heller	Jetzmann
Markus Glandt	Franz Hellmüller	Maria Jiku <i>aka</i>
Daniel Glatzel	Frauke Helwes	JKUUUUUUUUUUUU
Alan Gleeson	Nina de Heney	Marisol Jiménez
Yair Elazar Glotman <i>aka</i> Mephisto	Patrick Hengst	Benedikt Joch
Wunderbar	Brad Henkel	Jodi
Heinz-Erich Gödecke	Sascha Henkel	Sven-Åke Johansson
Annie Goh	Guido Henneböhl	Marja Johansson <i>aka</i> Tsembla
Jean-Jacques Goichon	Ludger Hennig	Zam Johnson
Golgi Apps	Paul Hession	Claudio Jolowicz
Ruth Goller	Freda Heyden	Nathan Jones
Emilio Gordoa	Benjamin Hiesinger	Wilbert De Joode
Rubén Gordon	Masaya Hijikata	Yan Jun
Dale Gorfinkel	Maike Hilbig	Berit Jung
Ron Goris	Dominik Hildebrand	Soo Jung Kae
Janis Görlich	Christoph Hillekamps	Kasia Justka
Helena Gough	Jassem Hindi	Manuel Kailuweit
Friedemann Graef	Shelley Hirsch	Kalle Kalima
Eli Gras	Nina Hitz	Anna Kaluza
Lou Grassi	Echo Ho	Margareth Kammerer
Frank Gratkowski	Taylor Ho Bynum	Andreas Karaoulanis <i>aka</i>
Gigi Gratt	Olaf Hochherz	bestbefore
Ronny Graupe	Hannes Hoelzl	Vladimir Karparov
Andy Graydon	Devin Hoff	Katharina Karrenberg
Antye Greie <i>aka</i> AGF	Alex Hofmann	Sukandar Kartadinata
Will Gresson	Wolf Hogekamp	Yuko Kaseki
Michael Griener	John Hollenbeck	Nicholas Kashian
Joel Grip	Olaf Hollmann	Lu Katavist
Philipp Gropper	Alexander Holm	Constantine Katsiris
Ola Grunholz	Julius Holtz	Achim Kaufmann
Marcus Grysczak <i>aka</i>	Derek Holzer	Takuji Kawai
Hypertrashwonderland	Christiane Hommelsheim	Willi Kellers
Gerhard Gschloessl	Jason Honea	Nicholas A. Kelly <i>aka</i> Eiliyas
Hildur Gudnadottir	Tore Honoré Bøe <i>aka</i> Origami	Fiona Kelly
Francesco Guerri	Boe	Uli Kempendorff
Kristof Guez	Tristan Honsinger	Don Kennedy
Jasmina Gufford <i>aka</i> Jasmina	Oscar Jan Hoogland	Tommi Keränen <i>aka</i> Keränen
Maschina	Nathalie Hope	Dion Kerr
Filipa Guimarães	Cat Hope	Michael Kersting
Ulrich (Uli) Gumpert	Rob Hordijk	Julian Kessler
Giray Gurkal	Ludwig Hornung	Christian Kesten
Mats Gustafsson	Ottó Horváth	Eli Keszler
Will Guthrie	Fred van Hove	Isambard Khroustaliov <i>aka</i> Sam
Lander Gyselinck	Ola Hoyer	Britton
Ralf Haarmann	Alex Huber	Brian "Jah Tooth" Kiel
Arnold Haberl <i>aka</i> Noid	Margarete Huber	Gideon Kiers
Colin Hacklander	Nathalie Huber	Kathrin von Kieseritzky
Haco	Carl Ludwig Hübsch	Bari Kim
Tobias Hagleitner	Paul Hubweber	Hyoungh-min Kim
Hainbach	Ye Hui	Soon Kim
Keiji Haino	Jörg Huke	Markus Kison
Ingebrigt Haker Flaten	Jonas Hummel	Mike Kitcher
Axel Haller	Jan Hupe	Robert Klammer
Samuel Halscheidt	Jenny Hval	Miako Klein
Mary Halvorson	Shin Hyo-Jin	Christopher Klein
Julyen Hamilton	Il Marchese Gaetano Ciurcina	Christopher Kline
Reinhart Hammerschmidt	Eren Iliri	Martin Klingenberg
Anders Hana	Thibault Imm	Meinrad Kneer
David Haney	Isak Immanuel	Ute Kneisel <i>aka</i> illute
David Hantelius	Shingo Inao	Caroline Knöbl
Hanna Hartman	Daisuke Ishida	Kirk Knuffke
By Haruo	Islaja	Hans Koch

Hans W. Koch	Davide Lorenzon	Katharina Meves
Ritsche Koch	Frantz Lorient	Kalle Mews
Jonas Kocher	Rodolphe Loubatière	Henry Mex
Hartmut Koehler	Paul Lovens	Sabina Meyer
Jason Koehnen	Kay Lübke	Peter Meyer
Kohki	Maria Lucchese	Bernhard Meyer
Rainer Kohlberger	Cristiano Luciani <i>aka</i> Cris X	Liza Mezzacappa
Aleksander Kolkowski	Anke Lucks	Thomas Michael Kumlehn
Anton Kolosov	Jon S. Lunde	Manuel Miethe
Bill Kouligas	Karin Lustenberger	Vladimir Miller
Marinos Koutsomichalis	Chris Lyons	Denitsa Mineva
Anette Krebs	Zan Lyons	MimiCof <i>aka</i> . Midori Hirano
Siegfried Krieg	Daniel M Karlsson	Ministry of Foreign Affairs (MOFA)
Kroffork	Animal Machine	Phil Minton
Martin Kruemmling	Jeongeun Maeng	Terry Minyen Hsieh
Petra Krumphuber	Luciano Maggiore	Brian Mitchell
Martin Küchen	Mirco Magnani <i>aka</i> Minox	Manuel Mitterhuber
Valerie Kuehne	Christian Magnusson	Takuro Mizuta Lippit <i>aka</i> dj sniff
Martin Kuentz <i>aka</i> Unkeuntz	Miguel Magy Ganiko	Anton Mobin <i>aka</i> Anthony Baron
Marco Kuhn	Rudi Mahall	Wieland Moeller
Kadet Kuhne	Christopher Mahlstedt	Heide Moldenhauer
Almut Kühne	Michael Maierhof	Harmony Molina
Jelena Kuljic	Mike Majkowski	Andy Moor
Peter Kunsch	Enrico Malatesta	Aaron Moore
Jürgen Kupke	Reverendo Man Manly	Cooper Moore
Klaus Kürvers	Felicity Mangan	Alexander Moosbrugger
Christoph Kurzmann	Aldtie Mann	Benoît Moreau
Doreen Kutzke	Hiroki Mano	Dave Morecroft
Fine Kwiatkowski	Clarence Manueto	Myra Moreta
Benjamin L. Aman	Alex Marcelo	Seiji Morimoto
Enrico Labbate	Lionel Marchetti	Takeo Moriyama
Anne LaBerge	Rocco Marchi	Solomiya Moroz
Sonja LaBianca	Damian Marhulets	Michael Moser
Robert Landfermann	Ana Maria Rodriguez	Norbert Möslang
Andreas Lang	Beate Maria Wörz	David Moss
Sam Langer	Jörg Maria Zeger	Verónica Mota <i>aka</i> Cubop
Joke Lanz	Johanna Marie Bodeux <i>aka</i> DJ NuitNoire	Stine Janvin Motland
Michele Lanzini	Christian Marien	Nick Mott
Gearóid Laoghaire	Luca Marini	Mr. Monodread
Didier Lasserre	Dirk Markham <i>aka</i> Système D	Matthias Muche
Ingrid Laubrock	Markus Markowski	Benno Muheim
Anders Lauge Meldgaard <i>aka</i> Frisk	Phillip Marks	Tisha Mukarji
Frugt or Supermelle	Sara Hildebrand Marques	Geoff Mullen
Louis Laurain	Lopes	Matthias Müller
Philippe Lauzier	Edoardo Marraffa	Peter Müller
Okkyung Lee	Lucia Martinez	Richard Müller
Yann Leguay	Israel Martínez	Henrik Munkeby Nørstebø
Thomas Lehn	Daniele Martini	John Murphy <i>aka</i> Svril
Hanno Leichtmann <i>aka</i> Static	Kristine Marx	Max Murray
Jan Leipnitz	Sebastian Maschat	Wolfgang Musil
Kathrin Lemke	Carlo Mascolo	Adrian Myhr
Alessandra Leone	Nadav Masel	Kim Myhr
Daniel Lercher	Elo Masing	Theo Nabicht
Jason Lescalleet	Sabir Mateen	Nadja
Lettera 22	Hada Benedito Mateo	Kent Nagai
Gunnar Lettow	Stephan Mathieu	Tomoko Nakasato
Elliot Levin	Mari Matsutoya	Kita Naoki
Jason Levis	Kaffe Matthews	Dafna Naphtali
Reuben Lewis	Léo Maury <i>aka</i> Niedowierzanie	Elisa Natali
Gianluca Libertore	Magda Mayas	Alex Nathanson
Patryk Lichota	Victor Mazón Gardoqui	Navs and Tom
Christian Lillinger	Rafal Mazur	Neander
Kris Limbach	Jaime McGill	Dylan Neely
Hui-Chun Lin	Colin McLean	Jaleh Negari
Carl Lindh	Joe McPhee	Helge Neidhardt <i>aka</i> Der Tapeman
Anders Lindsjö	Thomas Meadowcroft	Nekrobot
Hannes Lingens	Roberta WJ Meatball	Andrea Neumann
Karsten Lipp	David Meier	Peer Neumann
Nico Lippolis	Gido Meier <i>aka</i> Gido Ott	Keir Neuringer
Maya Lipsker	Barblina Meierhans	Nikolaus Neuser
Gal Liraz	Niko Meinhold	Chris Newman
Fryderyk Lisek	Boris Meinhold	Conni Nicklaus
Victor Lisinski	Chico Mello	Pascal Niggenkemper
Max Loeb	Laura Mello	Mattias Nihlén
Oscar Loeser	Daniel Menche	BJ Nilsen
Nico Lohmann	Marco Mendeni	
Fred Lonberg-Holm	Robert Menzel	
Coralie Lonfat	Amine Mesnaoui	
Martin Lorenz		

Paal Nilssen-Love	Olivier Di Placido	Henry Sansom
Stina Nilsson	Marino Pliakas	Susana Santos Silva
Konrad Nitsch	Mat Pogo	Joshua Santosspirito
Steve Noble	Horacio Pollard	Andrea Sanz-Vela
Jérôme Noetinger	Kálmán Pongrácz <i>aka</i> Rovar 17	Noriko Sasaki
Horst Nonnenmacher	Oliver Potratz	Julie Sassoon
Sean Noonan	Thomas Praestegaard	Masahiko Satoh
The Norman Conquest	Daniel Prätzlich	Eric Schaefer
Maria Norseth Garli	Thomas Prestin	Matija Schellander
Michael Northam	Gert-Jan Prins	Ruth Schepers
Olga Nosova	Britta Pudelko	Ursula Scherrer
Attilio Novellino	Caroline Pugh	Ignaz Schick
Alex Nowitz	Adam Pultz Melbye	Günter Schickert
Koen Nutters	Manuel "Tornow" Podhostnik	Christoph Schiller
Seamus O'Donnell <i>aka</i> Lifeloop DJ	Claudio Puntin	Benjamin Schindler
RAMDON	Pure	Jörg Schippa
Severin O'Hara	Tobias Purfürst	Elke Schipper
Raz O'Hara	Mick Pusch	Tobias Schirmer
Bernd Oeszevim	Sasha Pushkin	Johannes Schleiermacher
Christoph Ogiermann	Simone Quatrana	Peter Schlewinski
Lothar Ohlmeier	Alessandro Quintavalle	Almut Schlichting
Maresuke Okamoto	Paul Raab	Wolfgang Schliemann
Nils Økland	Anna von Raison	Vincent von Schlippenbach <i>aka</i> DJ
Rieko Okuda	Matthew Ramolo	Illvibe
Fredrik Olofsson	Vanessa Ramos-Velasquez	Burkhard Schlothauer
Morten J. Olsen	Kostia Rapoport	Volker Schlott
Aki Onda	Louis Rastig	Markus Schmickler
Ondula	Rastko	Caroline Schmidt
Fabio Orsi	Ratbag <i>aka</i> Julian Percy	Andreas Schmidt
Maja Osojnik	Maurizio Ravalico	Marc Schmolling
Nils Ostendorf	Andrea Reali	Marpa Schold
Bob Ostertag	Anna-Luise Recke	Tim Schomacker
Tim Ower	Thomas Rehnert	Britta Schönbrunn
Olga Ozieranska	Christoph Reimann	Justin Schornstein
Giorgio Pacorig	Heiner Reinhardt	Heidrun Schramm
Daniel Padden	Michael Renkel	Tabea Schrenk
Pia Palme	Rico Repotente	John Schröder
Zelda Panda / Marzipan	Yair Reshef	Christian Schröder
Marzipan	Ingo Reulecke	Daniel Schröteler
Andreas Paolo Perger	Sir Richard Bishop	Matthias Schubert
Torsten Papenheim	Monika Rinck	Franz Schuier
Evan Parker	Cea Rinne	Gary Schultz
Alexandru Pasca	Claudia Risch	Stefan Schultze
Tuna Pase	Eve Risser	Willem Schulz
Anthony Pateras	Philippe Rives	Nicolas Schulze
Ruben Patino <i>aka</i> Pato	Stephane Rives	Moritz Schumacher
Lee Patterson	Owen Roberts	Dorothea Schürch
Frank Paul Schubert	Claudio Rocchetti	Vinzenz Schwab
Kathrin Pechlof	Michael Rodach	Matthias Schwabe
Michele Pedrazzi <i>aka</i> Bob	Jan Roder	Irène Schweizer
Meanza	Franz Rogowski	Martin Schwendemann
Stefania Alos Pedretti	Stefan Roigk	Markus Schwill <i>aka</i>
Mikaele Pellegrino	Billy Roisz	OHMNOISE
Andrea Pensado	Tom Rojo Poller	Paul Schwingenschlögl
Fernando Perales <i>aka</i> Viva La	Scott Roller	Dylan van der Schyff
Muerte	Carolina Romano	Cinzia Scordia
Sara Pereira	Simon Rose	Richard Scott
Carles Peris	Jon Rose	Andrew Seal <i>aka</i> PRAYING FOR
Miles Perkin	Ann Rosén	OBLIVION
Andrew Perry	Adelina Rosenstein	Wolfgang Seidel
Adam Persson	Dean Rosenthal	Muneomi Senju
Markus Pesonen	Federica Rossella <i>aka</i> Duchamp	Claudia de Serpa Soares
Ernst-Ludwig Petrowsky	Paul Roth	Aram Shelton
Daniela Petry	Arthur Rother	Angelika Sheridan
Natalia Petschatnikov	Sam Rouanet	Ariel Shibolet
Maria Petschatnikov	Gary Rouzer	Derek Shirley
Sam Pettigrew	Matteo Rovesciato	Chino Shuichi
Dietrich Petzold	Andrew Roy	Miriam Siebenstädt
Karsten Pflum	Joris Ruehl	Laura Siegmund
Ulrich Philipp	Gerhard Rühm	Alan Silva
Marc Pichelin	Leif Rumbke	Grégoire Simon
Matthias Pichler	Olaf Rupp	Lukas Simonis
Andreas Pichler	Tatsumi Ryusui	Peder Simonsen
Peter Piek	Joana Sá	Luca Sisera
Alex Pierotti	Jorge Sad	Dario Sisera
Ivan Pilat	Iku <i>Sakan</i>	Harri Sjöström
Olivia Pils <i>aka</i> Fake Mistress	Sam Salem	Øyvind Skarbø
Cédric Piromalli	Elettra di Salvo	Wanja Slavin
Vesna Pisarovic	Otis Sandsjö	Maciej Sledziecki

Ofer Smilansky	Todosch <i>aka</i> Torsten Holger	Copacabana
Joe Smith	Schlopsnies	Per Warberg
Aaron Snyder <i>aka</i> Big Daddy	Kasper Tom	Pierce Warnecke
Muggleston	Makiko Tominaga	Steven Warwick <i>aka</i> Heatsick
Hild Sofie Tafjord	Krzysztof Topolski <i>aka</i> Arszyn	Ute Wassermann
Ståle Liavik Solberg	Torba	Anna Webber
Maja Solveig Kjelstrup Ratkje	Andrés Torres <i>aka</i> Sonora	Tilo Weber
Camilla Sørensen	Mapiripán	Christian Weber
Rogelio Sosa	Olivier Toulemonde	Marco Wedel
Igor Souza	Benno Trautmann	Luc Van Weelden <i>aka</i> PQ
Igor Spallati	Valerio Tricoli	Weesch
Lisa Sperrfechter	Andreas Trobollowitsch	Susanne Wegener
Iris Sputh	Johannes Tröndle	Michael Wehmeyer
Ravi Srinivasan	Trouby Modular	Benjamin Weidekamp
Lothar Stahl	Assif Tsahar	Christian Weidner
Norbert Stammberger	Anais Tuerlinckx	Astrid Weins
Tasos Stamou	Michael Turnbull	Andreas Weiser
Jacek Staniszewski	Roger Turner	Marc Weiser
Paul Stapleton	Michael Tuttle	Steffi Weismann
Dirk Steglich	Kazuhisa Uchihashi	Sandra Weiss
Oliver Steidle	Gerhard Uebele	James Welburn
Jason Stein	Masahiko Ueji	Fritz Welch
Susanne Stelzenbach	Christian Ugurel	Marcelina Wellmer
Elias Stemeseder	Birgit Uhler	Mark-r Weneman
Stan Stencil	Gebhard Ullmann	Markus Wenninger
Edith Steyer	URGE NYX	Manfred Werder
Hanno Stick	Jason Urick	Lutz Wernicke
S.L. Stoianovici <i>aka</i> Nu & Apa	V	Michael Wertmüller
Neagrā	Mika Vainio	Eike Wesenberg
Andreas Stoiber	Ilpo Väisänen	Anna Westberg
Ulrike Stortz	Rinus van Alebeek	Jonas Westergaard
Fabiana Striffler	Kevin van Elzen	Markus Wettstein
Meg Stuart	Peter van Huffel	Mark Whitecage
J'Han Styles Kaupmann <i>aka</i> Jon	Paul van Kemenade	Jürg Wickihalder
Styles-Kaufmann	Zeger Vandenbussche	Wolter Wierbos
Dan Peter Sundland	Ken Vandermark	Nicolas Wiese
Suns of Thyme	Els Vandeweyer	John Wiese
Ernst Surberg	Sredni Vashtar <i>aka</i> Futura	Håvard Wiik
The Surreal Error	Jesus Vega	Andreas Wildhagen
Jean-Michel Susini	Stella Veloce	Tamara Wilhelm
Takako Suzuki	Mario Verandi	Ansgar Wilken
Svet	Joris Vercammen	Andreas Willers
Nick J. Swarth	Giovanni Verga	Christopher Williams
Emily Sweeney	Giovanni Verga	Joe Williamson
Mikael Szafirowski	Tobias Vethake	Mark Wilson <i>aka</i> Conure
Frank Szardenings	Dafne Vicente-Sandoval	Christoph Winkel
Dawid Szczesny	Fay Victor	Oscar der Winzige
Agnes Szelag	André Vida	Christian Wolfarth
Kazue Taguchi	Pacho da Vila	Marion Wörle <i>aka</i> Frau W
Mariko Tajiri	David Vilayeck <i>aka</i> Ayankoko	Hainer Wörmann
Aki Takase	Simon Vincent	Marc Wrasse
Eiji Takeda	Hugues Vincent	Jack Wright
Akemi Takeya	Aldo Vio	Wrist
Omar Tamez	Antti Virtaranta	Effie Wu
Hans Tammen	Sabine Vogel	James Wylie
Kynan Tan	Paul Vogel	XAMBUCA
Achim Tang	Stefan Voglsinger	Hoshiko Yamane
Yoko Tani	Håvard Volden	Dawang Yingfan Huang
Dragos Tara	Timo Vollbrecht	Michelle Yom
Sophie Tassignon	Yvan Volochine	Makiho Yoshida
Utku Tavil	Vomir <i>aka</i> Romain Perrot	Ingar Zach
Benedict Taylor	Jan von Klewitz	Marta Zapparoli <i>aka</i> Penelopex
Chad Taylor	Kerta von Kubin	Anna Zaradny
Noel Taylor	Alexander von Schlippenbach	Alice Zawadski
Ricardo Tejero	Michael Vorfeld	JD Zazie
Zoran Terzic	Biliana Voutchkova	Lydia Zechelius
Christof Thewes	Antje Vowinkel	Ame Zek
Michael Thieke	Jeremy Wade	Michael Zerang
Thomas Thiery <i>aka</i> Th Th	Louise Wagner	Hannes Zerbe
Clayton Thomas	Ute Waldhausen	Jesper Zeuthen
Pär Thörn	John Wall	Etienne Ziemniak
John Tilbury	Henrik Walsdorff	Joachim Zoepf
Tippi Tillvind <i>aka</i> t.tillvind	Jennifer Walshe	Philip Zoubek
Liping Ting	Michael Walz	Joshua Zubot
Piotr Tkacz	N Wandt <i>aka</i> Panzerdivision	Thomas Zunk